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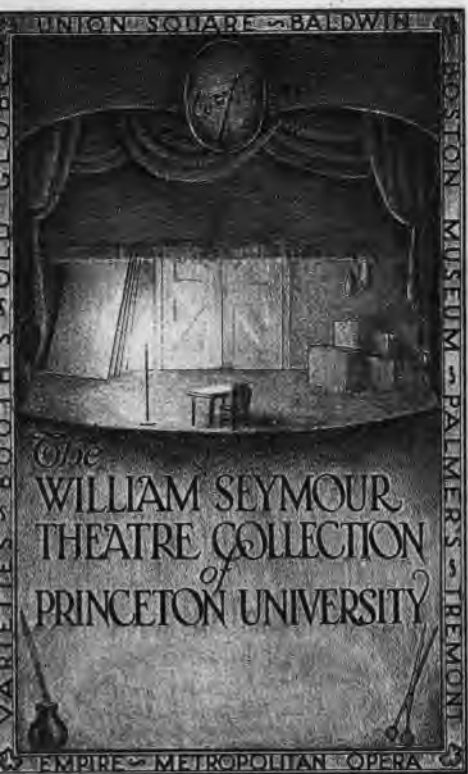
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SELWYN

ROLLING STONES

EX. 1151



Rolling Stones

BY
EDGAR SELWYN



SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th St., New York.



ROLLING STONES

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

BY
EDGAR SELWYN

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ROLLING STONES

ORIGINAL CAST

AS PRODUCED AND PLAYED AT THE HARRIS THEATER,
NEW YORK

(In the order in which they first appear.)

JERICO W. BRADEN, *known as Mr. Walter, Arthur*
Aylesworth
BUCK RYDER.....*Harrison Ford*
CHARLES BRANNIGAN.....*Harry Bradley*
MRS. BRANNIGAN.....*Beatrice Ingram*
ANNA ANDERSON.....*Marguerite Skirvin*
EMMA BRADEN.....*Rae Selwyn*
FULSON RICE.....*Frank Kingdon*
NORMA NOGGS.....*Marie Carroll*
NETTIE.....*Elizabeth Lee*
POLICEMAN.....*George Smithfield*
DAVE FULTON.....*Charles Ruggles*
POSTMAN.....*Fred Malcolm*
STRAWBRIDGE.....*Dan Jarrett*
DENISON.....*James Kearney*
BURGLAR.....*Geo. F. Smithfield*
WATCHMAN.....*Fred Malcolm*
A CLERK, *at the Hewitt Offices, Edwin R. Wolf*

3

(RECAP)

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ROLLING STONES

ACT I

SCENE: *The parlor at the BRANNIGAN'S. The room is papered with large figures and furnished ornately. There is a large opening at center through which can be seen the hallway and stairs leading to floor above. Up R. is a bay window which overlooks the street and the house stoop. Down R. is a door which leads to MRS. BRANNIGAN'S private sitting room. Down left is a fireplace with gas logs. A piano up L. with some potted artificial plants. There is an old-fashioned couch at R. C. and a round table with two chairs center; also an easy-chair off fireplace. There are some typical boarding-house pictures on the walls.*

DISCOVERED: JAP WALTERS, seated to right of center table. The hall door is heard to close, and BUCK RYDER enters.

BUCK. (*In door up c.*) Hello, Walter!

JAP. (*Reading paper*) Oh, hello, old man; where have you been?

BUCK. All over town. Looking for a job. (*Puts coat on chair L. of table, hat on table*)

JAP. Strike anything?

BUCK. (*Crosses to fire*) Not even a promise.

JAP. Too bad. Better go down and get your dinner.

BUCK. (*Warming hands*) Is Mrs. Brannigan down there?

JAP. Yes, and Mr. Brannigan, too.

BUCK. (*With a laugh*) I'd stand a fine chance of getting anything, wouldn't I?

JAP. Oh, I don't know. Brannigan is a little touchy, but I think the old lady is all right.

BUCK. It was the old lady who told me this morning not to come back.

JAP. Why?

BUCK. Oh, I'm about three weeks behind.

JAP. Why not find a cheaper boarding house?

BUCK. What good would that do me? It's easier to stall Mrs. Brannigan than to go up against a stranger. Besides, I've got a reason for wanting to be here.

JAP. Haven't you any money at all?

BUCK. Not a dollar, nor a friend who would loan me one. The only way I could raise any money would be to hold up somebody with a gun.

JAP. Seems queer you can't get something to do. You're young, intelligent—good education——

BUCK. Education! Ha! That's the trouble. If I'd only learned a trade instead of filling my head with history and dead languages, I'd have been eligible for some union and I'd probably be rolling in luxury by now, instead of begging for a place to sleep.

(JAP laughs.)

BRANNIGAN. (*Enters center. Crosses down L. of table—BUCK turns to fire*) I'm afraid our dinner was not to your liking, Mr. Walter. You hurried through it so quickly.

JAP. Oh, the dinner was all right, but I've acquired that eastern habit of eating fast. I've noticed if you don't, you lose out.

BUCK. You certainly do in this place.

BRANNIGAN. (*Turning suddenly*) Oh, I thought you'd gone.

BUCK. I didn't think your wife would mind me coming back to sleep.

BRANNIGAN. But we *can't have* you staying on here. We need your room for Mr. Braden.

(JAP rises and crosses in front of sofa, and rolls cigarette.)

BUCK. Who's Mr. Braden?

BRANNIGAN. He's one of the heirs to the Hewitt estate and we expect him from the West to-night.

BUCK. Well, that's all right. I'll move into the attic. I'm not particular where I sleep.

BRANNIGAN. I'm very sorry, but we don't want you here at all.

BUCK. I'll speak to Mrs. Brannigan about that.
(Turns to fire as if dismissing BRANNIGAN)

BRANNIGAN. My wife always does as I wish.

BUCK. Ha!

BRANNIGAN. And I shall tell her about you at once. (Going out calling "Petty, Petty dear")

JAP. I'm afraid you're in for it now, old man.

BUCK. Who is this fellow they're putting me out for?

JAP. (Crosses to back of table—lights cigarette)
Who—Braden? Oh, he's from the West—Walla-Walla, out in Washington.

BUCK. (Sits on arm of chair by fire) What has a man with money got to do with the Brannigans?

JAP. Oh, he's the bright particular hope of the Brannigan family just now. Old man Hewitt left Braden his entire candy business, providing he marries Mrs. Brannigan's niece.

BUCK. Not that little fluff, Norma Noggs?

JAP. That's the girl. You've seen her floating around here. It seems she's the daughter of old Hewitt's first sweetheart. That's why he wanted Braden to marry her, I suppose.

BUCK. Sounds like a story book, doesn't it?

JAP. (Crossing down front of table) Yes, but it sometimes happens in real life.

BUCK. Just think of a mutt falling into a pile like that.

JAP. What makes you think he's a mutt?

BUCK. Nobody but a mutt would have that luck. It wouldn't happen to me.

JAP. Well, it may not be so soft for Braden either. He's got to marry Miss Noggs before he can get the money, you know.

BUCK. He's got the chance at it, anyway. Life is certainly one grand little joke. (*Turns to fireplace*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Enters up c. Crosses down to BUCK. BRANNIGAN follows*) Where is he?

BRANNIGAN. (*Crosses down R. of table. JAP crosses R.*) Over there by the fire.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Down to BUCK*) What do you mean by coming back here after I distinctly told you that you'd have to leave unless you paid your bill?

BUCK. I didn't think you'd care so long as I didn't eat here.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. You're not entitled to eat here.

BUCK. Perhaps not, but I *did* pay my board regularly for over a year and I'll pay again as soon as I get something to do.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. We need your room for Mr. Braden. He's coming to-night.

BUCK. That's all right. You can put me somewhere else. I don't care where, so long as there's a roof over it.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. I'm paying rent for the whole building.

BUCK. But your rent goes on whether I'm here or not, so you're not losing anything by letting me stay.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. We're not in business for our health. It's pay or get out.

BUCK. Well, of course, if that's the way you feel about it there's no room for further argument, but I'm sorry you can't see it my way.

ANNA. (*Enters from stairs and comes down*) Why, Buck—

BUCK. (*Crossing to her and taking her hand*)
Hello, Anna—I was hoping I'd see you.

ANNA. Where have you been? I missed you at dinner.

BUCK. (*With a glance at Mrs. BRANNIGAN*)
You're the only one that did, I guess.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (D. L.) Well, are you going or not?

BUCK. (*Crosses, gets coat and hat*) Sure.

ANNA. (*Crossing to Mrs. BRANNIGAN*) Going? Going where?

BUCK. I haven't the remotest idea, but they don't want me here.

BRANNIGAN. I'm waiting, Mr. Ryder.

BUCK. That's the kind of a job you ought to have. (*Crosses for his hat and coat*)

BRANNIGAN. Insulting!

BUCK. Oh, I don't suppose you have any objections to me taking my clothes with me?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Clothes?

BUCK. They wouldn't be of any use to you. Brannigan couldn't wear them. (*With a laugh he turns and dashes up the stairs*)

BRANNIGAN. (*Crosses up a bit*) That's the most insolent young man I ever met with.

(*Door bell rings.*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*As the door bell rings*)
Charlie, answer the door. Nettie is busy with the dishes. (*Puts out table lamp*)

BRANNIGAN. Oh, of course, the servants are always doing something else.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Do as you're told.

BRANNIGAN. I'm going, my dear, I'm going. (*He exits into hall, right*).

(JAP crosses up to door, then crosses down L. of table.)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Going toward door R.*)
Never saw such a lazy man in all my life.

ANNA. Oh, Mrs. Brannigan.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Stops and turns*) Yes?

ANNA. (*Going to her*) Does Mr. Ryder owe you very much money?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Why do you ask?

ANNA. Well, I'm very sorry for him. He's tried awfully hard to find work; I know he has.

(JAP puts out cigarette.)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. So he's got you going, has he? Now, take my advice and don't have anything to with him.

ANNA. Never mind about that. How much does he owe you?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Sixty-five dollars.

ANNA. Will you let him stay on if I pay it for him?

JAP. (*In front of table c.*) Excuse me, Miss Anderson, but I know that Ryder won't let you do that.

ANNA. But he needn't know anything about it. Mrs. Brannigan won't tell him—(*To MRS. BRANNIGAN*) Will you?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. I'll have to tell him something.

ANNA. Can't you just say that you've decided to let him run on a little longer, and then when he does pay you, you can give it back to me without his ever knowing anything about it?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. I don't like to lie.

ANNA. It's not really a lie, and it would make me very happy.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Well, don't blame me for it afterwards, that's all.

ANNA. Certainly not. I'll get you the money now. (*She runs up the stairs. JAP crosses to fire*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Crosses up a bit*) Poor girl, I never suspected anything like that!

JAP. She can't help feeling sorry for him, the poor devil!

MRS. BRANNIGAN. When a girl gives up real money for a man, believe me, it's the beginning of the end. (*Crosses down R.*)

BRANNIGAN. (*Heard in hall*) Come right in, Mr. Rice. My wife is in the parlor. (*Enters center*) My dear, it's our niece, Norma, and her lawyer, Mr. Rice.

RICE. (*Crosses front of sofa*) How do you do, Mrs. Brannigan?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*With exaggerated welcome as RICE enters, followed by NORMA NOGGS*) Oh, I am surprised. (*After shaking hands with RICE, kisses NORMA*) So unexpected. Sit down, dear, and take off your hat.

(*NORMA sits C., R. table.*)

RICE. (*In front of sofa*) I'm afraid we can't stay. We've come over to see if you've heard the terrible news.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*R. of NORMA*) What news?

RICE. There's been a wreck this side of Omaha and——

NORMA. And Mr. Rice thinks that Mr. Braden was on that train.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Good heavens, he's not killed?

RICE. I'm afraid so.

JAP. (*Coming C. a bit. Throws newspaper in chair by fire*) What's that? Who's killed?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Mr. Braden.

JAP. That's impossible!

RICE. (*As they all look at JAP in astonishment*)
Who is this?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Mr. Walter. He's from the West, too. This is Mr. Rice, one of the executors for the Hewitt estate.

JAP. Glad to know you, sir. (*RICE crosses and shakes hands*) Excuse me for butting in, but I'm rather interested in Braden. What makes you think he's been killed?

RICE. There were a great many lives lost, but of course, I haven't been able to get any definite information.

NORMA. Isn't it awful?

RICE. I'm afraid there's not much doubt about it. I had a letter from his attorneys, saying he would arrive here by the Overland on the 21st. Well, to-day is the twenty-first and he didn't get in this morning, so he must have been on that train.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Crosses R. a step*) What do you think we ought to do?

BRANNIGAN. What can we do?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. If you *could* do anything we wouldn't be running a boarding house.

BRANNIGAN. Now, wait a minute. It's easy enough to find out whether Braden was on that train or not. Just call up information and inquire.

RICE. We'd get no results. The operators always have their instructions in a case like this. I suggest that we go directly to the railroad station and find out about it. Can we get a taxi around here?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. There's always a lot at the corner in front of the hotel. Run and get one, Charlie.

BRANNIGAN. I don't see the sense of standing around in a cold station.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. You do as you're told.

BRANNIGAN. Very well, but if I get sick—(*Goes out center*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. No such luck!

RICE. (*To NORMA*) In the meantime I'll telephone your mother so she won't feel anxious.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. You can see the 'phone in my sitting-room.

RICE. (*Crosses to room R.*) Thank you.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. I'll show you where it is. (*RICE follows her into room right. MRS. BRANNIGAN at door R.*) You don't mind, Mr. Walter?

JAP. No, not at all.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Wouldn't make any difference if you did. (*Exits*)

JAP. Oh, Miss Noggs. (*NORMA turns to him*) Do I understand that you're going to marry a man you've never seen? (*Crosses to her*)

NORMA. (*Rises*) Yes, isn't it romantic?

JAP. Seriously, now, you don't mean to tell me that there isn't some other fellow you wouldn't rather marry if it wasn't for this will thing?

NORMA. Why do you say that?

JAP. Well, every girl has a sweetheart, and when she's as pretty as you are—come on, own up. I won't tell anyone.

NORMA. Are you making love to me?

JAP. Certainly not.

NORMA. Well, it wouldn't make any difference if you were, because Mother says she's been waiting all her life for somebody to die and leave us some money, and we've just got to have this.

RICE. (*Enters from room, right, followed by MRS. BRANNIGAN*) I got your mother, Norma. She wants me to bring you home right away.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. You can drop her on your way to the station. (*Goes to window and looks out*) There's Charlie with the taxi, now.

RICE. (*Up in doorway c.*) Good. Come along, Norma. (*He goes out*)

NORMA. Good-night, auntie.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Kissing her*) Good-night, my dear. We'll let you know if we hear anything.

NORMA. Good-night, Mr. Walter. (*Goes out center*)

JAP. Good-night.

(MRS. BRANNIGAN *starts for door R.*)

ANNA. (*Enters from down-stairs door quickly*) He hasn't gone yet, has he?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*In front sofa*) Who?

ANNA. Mr. Ryder.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. No, he's still upstairs.

ANNA. Here's the money. (*Gives money to Mrs. Brannigan*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Now, remember, you're doing it against my advice.

ANNA. Yes, but he isn't to know.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. I won't tell him. (*Takes money and goes into her room*)

ANNA. You won't tell him either, will you, Mr. Walter?

JAP. He'll never get it out of me.

ANNA. Thanks. (*She starts up*)

JAP. Oh, Miss Anderson? (*She turns*) You've been at the Hewitt office a long time, haven't you?

ANNA. (*Coming down a step*) Yes, for several years. I was Mr. Hewitt's private secretary.

JAP. Do you expect to stay with the firm?

ANNA. If the new owner wants me.

JAP. If he's anything like I think he is, he will.

BUCK. (*Comes down the stairs with his bag packed*) Well, I'm on my way. Where's the lady of mercy?

JAP. In her room.

BUCK. (*Puts hat on table; coat and suitcase on chair*) Just want her to see I'm not taking anything with me that isn't mine.

ANNA. I'll tell her you're here. (*Goes into room left*)

JAP. (*Sitting in chair by fire, reading paper*) We've had a lot of excitement while you were upstairs. Braden may not get here after all.

BUCK. How's that?

JAP. The Overland was wrecked near Omaha and they think he was on it.

BUCK. Killed?

JAP. Don't know, but they're all upset about it.

BUCK. Gee, that's tough, ain't it? And I thought he was so lucky. I hope it isn't true. (*MRS. BRANNIGAN enters from room left, followed by ANNA*) Just going, Mrs. Brannigan! Thought you might like to take a look and see I've nothing belongs to you. (*Opens suitcase and lifts clothes*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*By chair R. of table*) You will have your little joke, Mr. Ryder. It isn't necessary for you to leave now. I've decided to fix up my sitting-room here for Mr. Braden, if he comes. (*Indicates room*) So I'll let you run on a little longer.

BUCK. Why this sudden change of heart?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Everything has been taken care of.

BUCK. Taken care of? You mean that somebody has paid for—? (*Looks at JAP*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. No, I'm doing it because—

BUCK. You're not doing anything. I know you well enough for that.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Surely, if I want to be charitable once in a while—

BUCK. I'm not accepting that kind of charity. (*To JAP*) Look here, Walter, you know I won't accept anything like that.

JAP. My dear fellow, I hadn't anything to do with it.

BUCK. Then who was it? (*He follows JAP's eyes to ANNA, who bows her head guiltily*) Ah! (*He draws a long breath, then turns to MRS. BRANNIGAN*) Mrs. Brannigan, if Miss Anderson has paid you any money for me will you please give it back to her?

ANNA. (*Crossing to front of table*) It's only a loan. You can pay me back.

BUCK. Mrs. Brannigan, give it back to her, please.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Crosses R. a step*) That's for her to say.

BUCK. (*To ANNA*) You must take it back, Anna.

(*ANNA goes to MRS. BRANNIGAN reluctantly, and holds out her hands.*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Gives her the money*) You'd never have gotten it from him. Now, Mr. Ryder, you can go on your way. (*Crosses to BUCK*)

BUCK. I've changed my mind about that, too.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. What?

BUCK. You'll get your money but I'll get it for you myself.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. I've heard those promises before.

BUCK. I'm going out to get that money for you to-night.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Where do you expect to get it?

BUCK. That's my business, but I'm going out for it now. If I'm not back you have your room, and if I am you'll have your money. In either case you have nothing to lose.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Well, so long as it's understood.

BUCK. And now, if you don't mind, I'd like to speak to Miss Anderson alone.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Very well. (*Crosses R. of ANNA*) Put *that* money where it will be safe. (*She goes into room R.*)

BUCK. (*Turning to JAP*) Can't you find something to do, Walter?

JAP. What? Oh, sure. (*Rises and goes up*) I've got an appointment outside. I'll keep it now. (*Gets hat and coat from rack. Puts newspaper on chair in hall*)

BUCK. Thanks.

ANNA. (*After JAP has gone*) Are you angry with me?

BUCK. Certainly not. It was bully of you. I can't tell you how much I appreciate what you tried to do for me.

ANNA. Then why wouldn't you let me help you? (*Crosses to BUCK*)

BUCK. I'm down pretty low, Anna, but I haven't yet taken money from a woman.

ANNA. But that's so silly. Aren't we friends?

BUCK. That's just why. That's just what makes me feel so humiliated.

ANNA. Humiliated!

BUCK. I don't expect you to understand it—I can't even explain it. Call it false pride if you like. It really doesn't matter. But I'm thoroughly ashamed of myself.

ANNA. Why?

BUCK. Here you are a mere slip of a girl in a big responsible position, able and willing to help me and here I am, a full-sized man, unable to help even myself—down and out: a failure.

ANNA. Oh, don't say that.

BUCK. I may as well face the truth, Anna. I've been a complete failure until now. I was even ready to lay down—to quit—but you've made me

realize that the world isn't all rotten—that somebody was *willing* to help; you've given me a lift and now I'm going to make another fight for it.

ANNA. Oh, I'm so glad. You're bound to win out if you try.

BUCK. That's just what I'm going to do—try. (*Quickly, as ANNA attempts to speak*) But if anything should happen, I won't be back.

ANNA. (*Troubled*) Buck!

BUCK. (*Takes her hand*) And that's why I want you to know what a lot you mean to me, and if anything should prevent me from seeing you again you'll know why I wanted to stay on in this house. You understand what I mean, don't you?

ANNA. Yes, Buck.

BUCK. (*Takes her in his arms fiercely, and kisses her*) Thank God for you, dear!

ANNA. But tell me——

BUCK. I haven't the right to say anything more now. Perhaps we'll have a good long talk later on, if——

ANNA. If what?

BUCK. If I come back.

ANNA. (*Starts to speak*) Good-night. (*They shake hands. Then she turns and goes up-stairs. On stairs*) Please come back.

(BUCK crosses up to door and watches her off. Then looks about until his eyes fall on his bag. Looks about furtively, puts on overcoat, then crosses to bag and opens it quickly. Takes out a revolver which he examines and puts in his overcoat pocket. Closes the bag. Puts on his hat and pulls it well over his eyes. Turns up his coat-collar and goes out center. After a pause the street door is heard to slam and

Curtain falls

SCENE II: *Shows a part of the North Clark Street Bridge. Several hours are supposed to have elapsed.*

AT RISE: BUCK is discovered leaning against railing R. A man and a woman enter from R. and walk rapidly across stage and go out L. A policeman enters left and stops on seeing BUCK. Trolley car can be seen crossing painted bridge on drop.

BUCK. (*Turns and sees him*) Oh, good evening, officer.

POLICEMAN. Waiting for somebody?

BUCK. No, just admiring the scenery.

POLICEMAN. (*Sarcastically*) It's a pretty thing, isn't it?

BUCK. Yes, it is. (*He goes out R.*)

(POLICEMAN crosses R. a step. In the meantime, DAVE FULTON has entered from right, but on seeing the policeman he turns back. The policeman stops him.)

POLICEMAN. Here—you!

DAVE. (*Stops and turns*) Me?

POLICEMAN. Yes, you. (*DAVE starts away again*) Wait a minute.

DAVE. (*As POLICEMAN comes to him*) I haven't done anything.

POLICEMAN. What's your game?

DAVE. What?

POLICEMAN. Come on, now. What's the idea?

DAVE. Haven't an idea in my head.

POLICEMAN. What's your business?

DAVE. Haven't any. Out of work.

POLICEMAN. Where do you live?

DAVE. Here in town.

POLICEMAN. Whereabouts?

DAVE. On the South Side.

POLICEMAN. What are you doing over here?

DAVE. Got put out of my room this morning. Been looking for a job.

POLICEMAN. Oh, I suppose you were looking for a job to clean the river. Come on now, I'm wise. What's your lay?

DAVE. I don't know what you mean.

POLICEMAN. Don't, eh? (*Showing club*) Know what this means, don't you? Well, it'll get you on the bean if you try to kid me.

DAVE. I'm telling you the truth. I'm out of work and haven't anywhere to go—honest, I haven't.

POLICEMAN. Well, I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. But if you try to pull anything around here you'll go in. Get me?

DAVE. I got you. (*As policeman turns away*) Say, officer—(*As the policeman turns back*) What do you have to do to get run in?

POLICEMAN. Just keep on trying to kid me.

DAVE. Couldn't you take me to the station house just for the night?

POLICEMAN. I could, but I ain't going to. Beat it.

DAVE. (*Turns dully and starts to go. He suddenly stops and sways, clutching the railing for support. He turns apologetically to POLICEMAN*) A little woozy, I guess. (*Exits*)

POLICEMAN. Too much booze, you mean. That's the trouble with all you guys. (*POLICEMAN crosses to L. a bit*)

(*Man enters from R. followed by BUCK. He sees POLICEMAN and stops. POLICEMAN goes out R. BUCK starts L. after man, stops, takes out revolver, puts it back in pocket as he says:*)

BUCK. Oh! Hell! I can't do it.

(DAVE enters from L., sees BUCK and creeps upon him, revolver in hand.)

DAVE. Put up your hands!

BUCK. What?

DAVE. Put up your hands or I'll blow your head off. Quick now, give me what you've got.

BUCK. (*Suddenly knocks gun from his hand and pushes him down*) Is that so?

DAVE. Don't hit me! Don't hit me!

BUCK. (*Picks up gun*) Get up—get up. (DAVE slowly rises to his feet, then suddenly dashes to the rail and tries to climb over. BUCK quickly seizes him and drags him back) No, you don't.

DAVE. Let me go! Let me go!

BUCK. Don't be a fool. I'm not going to hurt you. (*Throws DAVE over R.*)

BUCK. (*Puts gun in pocket*) You ought to have your head smashed. Nobody but a coward tries to kill himself.

DAVE. Yes, I know, but the fellow that says that always has a full stomach and a place to sleep.

BUCK. Oh, that's your trouble, is it? Well, how do you know that I'm not in the same fix?

DAVE. Are you?

BUCK. I'm hungry and I've just been put out of my boarding house, but I didn't figure on killing myself. I made up my mind that the world owed me a living and, like you, I came out to get it with a gun.

DAVE. Far as I can see you're not such a hell of a success either.

BUCK. No, because I couldn't go through with it. It's a lucky thing you met me instead of some other fellow. Come on now, get on your feet.

DAVE. What's the use?

BUCK. That cop will be back in a minute. (*Crosses to R.*)

DAVE. I don't care.

BUCK. He'll run you in.

DAVE. No—I asked him to, but he wouldn't do it.

BUCK. Good Lord! Are you as hard up as that?

DAVE. Ain't I telling you? I've no place to sleep, and haven't had anything to eat for days.

BUCK. You poor mutt! And I thought *I* was playing in hard luck! How'd you happen to get in this fix?

DAVE. (*Rises*) Lost my job and couldn't get another.

BUCK. Where are your folks?

DAVE. Haven't any folks.

BUCK. Dead?

DAVE. Both of them.

BUCK. Brothers—sisters?

DAVE. Not a thing. Nobody that cares. Came up from Evansville when my mother died. Got a job for seven a week. Laid me off two weeks ago. Looked for another till I near went blind. Couldn't pay for my room and got put out. Wouldn't mind that so much if I could only get something to eat.

BUCK. Here, you come with me, I'll get you something to eat.

DAVE. Where?

BUCK. Up where I've been living.

DAVE. Thought you said you were down and out.

BUCK. I thought I was, but after looking at you I feel I've been living in luxury. Look out. Here comes that cop. Brace up. Don't pay any attention to him. Laugh.

DAVE. What for?

BUCK. I'm taking you home with me.

DAVE. That's funny, all right, but I'm all laughed out.

BUCK. Do you want him to run us both in? Go

on, you fool, laugh. I'm going to get you something to eat.

DAVE. (*Laughing loudly but mirthlessly*) Gee, that's the funniest joke I've heard in a long time. (*Going right. The POLICEMAN has come along and stops to regard them with suspicion as they slap each other on the back and laugh uproariously*)

POLICEMAN. Ha! Ha! What's the joke?

BUCK. You wouldn't appreciate it, officer.

POLICEMAN. No?

BUCK. I've just met an old friend.

POLICEMAN. Old friend, eh?

BUCK. That's right. I've been searching for this boy a long time.

POLICEMAN. (*To DAVE. Goes forward as DAVE retreats*) You're the guy that wanted to go to the station, ain't you?

DAVE. I've changed my mind.

POLICEMAN. Maybe I have, too.

BUCK. Oh, no! Nothing like that at all. He's going home with me.

POLICEMAN. That so?

BUCK. Sure, now that I've found him, I'm going to hang on to him.

POLICEMAN. Let's see you start.

(*DAVE crosses to BUCK. Trolley car effect.*)

BUCK. Come on, Kid. Good-night, officer.

POLICEMAN. Good-night!

DAVE. Good-night!

(*Curtain starts. Rest of dialogue continues as curtain comes down.*)

BUCK. (*To DAVE as they go out right*) It's a damn good thing I found you.

DAVE. You bet it is.

BUCK. A nice warm bed with something solid inside of you—not so bad, eh?

DAVE. I should say not.

(The policeman stands watching them off.)

SCENE III: *The parlor at the BRANNIGANS', a short time after the preceeding scene. The room is dark save for the moonlight which streams through the windows. It is past midnight and everybody has apparently retired.*

AT RISE: BUCK appears from hall followed by DAVE. BUCK stops to draw the curtains across doors, then turns up lamp on table.

BUCK. *(Puts coat and hat on piano stool)* Wait a minute and I'll light this gas fire. Got a match?

DAVE. No. I haven't anything.

BUCK. Never mind—here's one. *(Takes match box from table)*

DAVE. *(As BUCK lights fire)* I never expected to see the inside of a place like this.

BUCK. No! Sit in this chair and get warm while I forage in the kitchen.

DAVE. *(Crossing to BUCK and stopping him again)* Say——

BUCK. What?

DAVE. What's your name?

BUCK. Buchanan Ryder. Call me Buck. What's yours?

DAVE. Mine is Dave Fulton. Call me Dave.

BUCK. All right, Dave. I'll go get the grub. *(Crosses up a bit)*

DAVE. Say——

BUCK. What?

DAVE. It's all right, ain't it?

BUCK. What?

DAVE. Me being in this place?

BUCK. Sure, it's all right.

DAVE. No chance of the landlady making a kick?

BUCK. Why, she'll be tickled to death to see a friend of mine.

DAVE. Pretty soft.

BUCK. But don't make any noise or you'll wake 'em up. I'll be back in a minute. (*BUCK goes out center and DAVE settles himself in front of fire and warms himself*)

DAVE. Oh, boy! (*Crash. He looks about quickly for a hiding place and darts under table. 2nd crash. DAVE comes out, crosses to sofa. After a pause he realizes that nobody is coming and peers out furtively*)

(*BUCK enters center carrying a plate containing the remains of a roast and some pie.*)

BUCK. Where are you?

DAVE. Here I am. What did you do?

BUCK. Smashed something. Couldn't help it. Had to feel for the grub in the dark.

DAVE. What did you get?

BUCK. (*Placing it on table*) Best I could do. Get a chair and dig in.

DAVE. Roast beef!

BUCK. And apple pie.

DAVE. (*Sits R. of table*) Oh, my God!

BUCK. (*Pours milk in DAVE's cup*) Don't wait.

DAVE. 'Scuse my fingers.

BUCK. Go to it! (*There is a pause during which DAVE eats ravenously*) How is it?

DAVE. I didn't know anything could taste so good.

BUCK. Help yourself to the pie.

DAVE. (*In a smothered voice*) In a minute.

BUCK. There's your half.

DAVE. Thanks. (*Another pause*) Say—know what?

BUCK. No, what?

DAVE. You were right—what you said. No man has any right to kill himself. (BUCK *grunts affirmatively*) It's cowardly.

BUCK. Sure it is.

DAVE. The world owes every man a living.

BUCK. That's what I say.

DAVE. All we ask is a place to sleep and something to eat. That ain't so much, is it?

BUCK. It's more than we get sometimes.

DAVE. You never can tell. You just got to keep on going.

BUCK. Guess that's why we hang on.

DAVE. Um-m! I didn't know there *could* be such pie.

BUCK. If Mrs. Brannigan were as good as her pie I wouldn't be in this fix.

DAVE. Why, what did she do to you?

BUCK. Oh, fired me out to make room for a fellow named Braden. He just fell into a big fortune.

DAVE. Some fellows have all the luck, haven't they?

BUCK. I'm not so sure he was lucky. There's a chance he was killed in that Omaha wreck. Anyway, I had to swallow my pride to come back here to-night.

DAVE. A fellow will swallow anything if he's hungry. Look at me. I didn't know I was going to run into this feed. I thought it was the finish until you came along. No use talking, there's only one way to get what's coming to us.

BUCK. What way is that?

DAVE. Hold 'em up and take it away from them. Bing!! (*Business*)

BUCK. You're wrong.

DAVE. But I thought—

BUCK. I started out with that idea, but I was wrong. That way doesn't get you anything.

DAVE. (*Sizing up the room*) Well, this looks pretty good to me.

BUCK. (*Rising and going to fireplace*) What a fool I've been!

DAVE. Buck, ain't you going to eat your pie?

BUCK. No, I'm too nervous to eat.

DAVE. (*Taking the pie*) That's good.

BUCK. (*Turns suddenly*) Listen: Providence sent you to me to-night.

DAVE. Who?

BUCK. Providence or fate or whatever you want to call it, but you saved me from something pretty bad.

DAVE. From what?

BUCK. From myself. I was desperate to-night and went out to get what I thought was coming to me with a gun.

DAVE. So did I, but you happened to be the first.

BUCK. You mean to say that I was the first you ever tried it on?

DAVE. The very first.

BUCK. That's hard luck, old man.

DAVE. No, it was good luck for me. If it had been some other guy I might have been caught.

BUCK. Suppose we'd both been caught? A term in prison. Perhaps criminals for the rest of our lives, if we just hadn't happened to meet—don't you see?

DAVE. Yes, and you saved me from the river, too.

BUCK. Exactly: we saved each other. I tell you it just wasn't meant for either of us to beat the game that way, so it must mean that there is something else coming to us.

DAVE. What?

BUCK. I don't know, but it certainly seems strange that out of all the millions in this city we two should be thrown together like this.

DAVE. Lucky thing for me, all right, all right.

BUCK. We're just a couple of rolling stones, I guess.

DAVE. And they say they never gather any moss.

BUCK. Well, let's stop rolling and try to gather some.

DAVE. How?

BUCK. Here we are, two fairly husky young fellows with the average amount of brains. Why can't we double up? Two heads are better than one. Let's go after the coin. There must be plenty of it in the world because somebody's getting it.

DAVE. There ain't any jobs. I know that!

BUCK. I don't mean in wages. I mean big money. Up in the thousands——

DAVE. (*With mouthful of food*) Thousands!

BUCK. That's the only kind worth while.

DAVE. You're right. You're right.

BUCK. I know I'm right. (*Crosses toward fire*) It only needs an idea. Can't you think of something?

DAVE. Not a damn thing!

BUCK. It will come if we think hard enough. We've simply got to beat this game and we can if we stick together.

DAVE. I'm for that. I'm for that.

BUCK. You can bunk with me to-night. And in the morning I'll give you some of my things and we'll start in to beat the world. What do you say? Will you stick?

DAVE. Will I? Like glue!

BUCK. Then we're partners.

DAVE. You bet. I'm for you—strong. (*Rises, crosses to BUCK, and shakes*)

BUCK. Good. There's my hand.

DAVE. Shake. (*They shake hands and at this moment outside C. D. BRANNIGAN yells, and MRS. BRANNIGAN screams. DAVE goes under the table. The curtains are thrown aside and BRANNIGAN*

enters, revolver in hand. He is followed by MRS. BRANNIGAN and ANNA. All are in their night-clothes. ANNA turns on light)

BRANNIGAN. (*Levelling revolver*) Throw up your hands.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Shrieking at the same time. Crosses down to L. upper of sofa*) Burglars—police!!!

BRANNIGAN. Call the police station! Telephone quick! (*Cross down L.*)

BUCK. Wait a minute! Wait a minute! What the devil is all this about?

BRANNIGAN. Hello, it's Ryder.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Ryder?

ANNA. (*At L. end of sofa*) Oh, I was so frightened.

BRANNIGAN. What are you doing here at this time of night?

BUCK. Eating.

MRS. BRANNIGAN and BRANNIGAN. (*Together*) Eating?

(*ANNA crosses around R. end of sofa.*)

BUCK. Certainly. I was hungry.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Seeing food for the first time*) Look at my poor roast beef! And I was saving it for to-morrow's lunch! (*Belligerently*) What is the meaning of this?

BUCK. Now, don't get excited. It's easily explained.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. You can't explain your going into my ice-box.

BRANNIGAN. Aha, that was the noise we heard.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. How dare you? How dare you steal!

BUCK. (*Backs away L.*) What?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Yes, steal—that's what you

did. (*Stumbles over DAVE's feet and shrieks*)
Who is that?

BUCK. (*To DAVE*) Stand up, kid.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*As DAVE rises with pie in hand*) Who is this?

BUCK. (*Passes DAVE to his L.*) Don't you know who this is?

BRANNIGAN. No, sir—we do not.

BUCK. This is Mr. Braden.

BRANNIGAN. Mr. Braden?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. *Our* Mr. Braden?

BUCK. Mr. Jericho W. Braden. Just arrived from Omaha.

BRANNIGAN. Bless my soul!

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Oh, my dear boy, I'm so glad. (*Throwing her arms gushingly about the surprised DAVE. BUCK crosses to ANNA R.*) We were so afraid you were on that train.

BRANNIGAN. (*Seizing his hand and wringing it effusively*) A narrow escape my boy, a narrow escape.

(BUCK is blithely explaining the matter to ANNA, as

Curtain falls

Second curtain

(MRS. BRANNIGAN with arms about DAVE. BRANNIGAN shaking his hand. DAVE's other hand holds pie.)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. My dear boy—I am so glad—
BRANNIGAN. I congratulate you, etc.

(*Ad lib. to curtain.*)

ACT II

SCENE: *Same as ACT I.*

AT RISE: NETTIE, a maid, appears at center door and shows EMMA BRADEN in.

NETTIE. Mr. Walter hasn't been down yet, but if you'll take a seat I'll call him.

EMMA. Thank you. (*Cross down toward fire*)

JAP. (*He is not seen by audience*) Good-morning, Nettie.

NETTIE. (*Turns to stairs just as JAP comes down*) Oh, I was just going up for you. There's a lady wants to see you.

JAP. (*At foot of stairs*). A lady to see me? Who is it?

NETTIE. I don't know her name. She's in the parlor. (*She exits left*)

JAP. (*Comes down center*) That's funny.

EMMA. (*Hearing his voice, turns*) Jerry!

JAP. Emma! Good Lord! When did you get here. (*Cross down to her*)

EMMA. Just got off the train——

JAP. Why did you come? Didn't I tell you?

EMMA. I know you did, but I got so worried when you didn't write.

JAP. (*Going up*) You didn't tell that girl my name, did you?

EMMA. I just asked for Mr. Walter.

(*JAP sighs with relief. Goes R. to end of sofa.*)

JAP. Thank goodness you didn't mention Braden, or the fat would have been in the fire.

EMMA. Aren't you going to kiss me, Jerry?

JAP. I knew I had forgotten something. (*Kisses her*)

EMMA. That was such a stingy one. (*Kiss*) That was better.

JAP. But you couldn't have come at a worse time.

EMMA. You said you'd send for me.

JAP. I meant to when I got things straightened out.

EMMA. What things? Why don't you tell me what they are?

JAP. I didn't dare tell you or you'd never have let me come without you.

EMMA. Why should you come without me? I'm your wife.

JAP. Sh! Sh!

EMMA. What is it, Jerry?

JAP. If I tell you now will you try to be reasonable?

EMMA. I'm always reasonable.

JAP. (*Skeptically*) Yes, I know.

EMMA. (*Sits on chair left of table*) Anyway, I don't see why we have to keep our marriage a secret.

JAP. There was a certain condition to Uncle Hewitt's will which makes it necessary.

EMMA. What condition?

JAP. That I marry Miss Noggs.

EMMA. But you can't. (*Up*) You're married to me.

JAP. Of course, dear, but don't you see? If they find that out I'll lose my share of his estate.

EMMA. You were trying to get rid of me.

JAP. Not at all. I'm trying to get rid of this girl.

EMMA. How?

JAP. By getting her to marry somebody else. Every girl has a sweetheart, and if I can only find a fellow she's in love with, I'll wish her on to him and she and I can split the estate between us.

EMMA. But suppose you can't get anybody to marry Miss Noggs?

JAP. A pretty girl like that? Gee. It ought to be a cinch. (*Crosses L. of sofa*)

EMMA. Pretty? Then you've already seen her?

JAP. (*Looking up toward door up c.*) Of course.

EMMA. How often?

JAP. Nearly every day.

EMMA. Jerry!

JAP. (*Turns back to EMMA*) I can't help seeing her. She's a niece of the people who run this house.

EMMA. That's why you came here.

JAP. Sure. I came on here without letting anyone know, so that I could find out something about her, and now I've got to stay and keep an eye on the situation.

EMMA. On this girl, you mean.

JAP. Now, don't be silly. If I wanted her for myself, I wouldn't be trying to marry her to someone else, would I?

EMMA. I don't know. Men do marry a lot of women in Chicago.

JAP. (*Crosses R. a bit*) Oh, don't be absurd.

EMMA. (*Follows him*) Jerry, promise you'll never love anyone but me.

JAP. I promise.

EMMA. (*Embracing him*) Oh, Jerry!

JAP. Now, for Heaven's sake, control yourself and let's get down to cases. (*Puts EMMA in chair R. of table*) Did you bring my identification papers?

EMMA. No.

JAP. What!

EMMA. You wired me to send them by registered mail and I did; haven't you got them?

JAP. No.

EMMA. I sent them the minute I got your wire. I didn't even stop to change the envelope.

JAP. How did you address it?

EMMA. Huh?

JAP. Did you send it to Walters?

EMMA. (*Blankly*) I don't think I did.

JAP. What!

EMMA. I'm afraid I forgot.

JAP. (*Crosses to L.*) Oh, Lord—then those papers will be coming here in the name of Braden!

EMMA. (*Rises*) I'm so sorry, Jerry.

JAP. It's up to me to camp on the doorstep and waylay that postman.

EMMA. (*Crosses to him*) Please don't be cross with me.

JAP. Did you remember to bring my trunk with you?

EMMA. Yes, but I left it at the station because I didn't know if you'd want it sent here or not.

JAP. Where's the check?

EMMA. Here it is.

JAP. (*Taking check*) All right, I'll get the trunk some other time, but I want you to get away now before anybody sees you, or I'll have to explain.

EMMA. Where'll I go?

JAP. To some hotel—there's one around the corner. I'll look you up this afternoon. Got any money?

EMMA. Yes, but I don't want to leave when I've just seen you.

JAP. You don't want me to lose out, do you?

EMMA. No, of course not.

JAP. (*Takes her up*) Then do as I say.

EMMA. You'll surely come and see me this afternoon?

JAP. The very first thing.

EMMA. All right, then.

JAP. And, Emma—(*She stops and he goes to her*) I'm awfully glad you're here, just the same. (*About to embrace her as the outside door is heard to open and close*) Look out! (*In a loud voice*) Yes, I'll

attend to that at once. (BUCK *enters and looks at EMMA curiously as he passes*) Thank you for coming. Good-bye.

EMMA. Good-bye. (*She goes out*)

BUCK. (*Crosses down toward safe. Puts hat and coat on sofa*) Who's your friend?

JAP. (*Crosses down to fire*) Oh, just a lady I know. You're out early this morning. Did you get what you went after last night?

BUCK. I certainly did. Is he up yet?

JAP. (*At fireplace*) Who?

BUCK. Mr. Braden.

JAP. What Mr. Braden?

BUCK. The fellow they were expecting from the West last night. He got in, after all. Haven't you seen him?

JAP. No.

BUCK. Well, I'll introduce you to him. We're great friends already. (*Starts for door down right*)

JAP. (*Crosses to BUCK*) Wait a minute. Do you mean to tell me that there is somebody here who claims to be Jericho W. Braden?

BUCK. Claims to be? He is.

JAP. (*Turns away*) Why, it's impossible.

BUCK. Why is it?

JAP. Because Braden—he was in that Omaha wreck.

BUCK. Sure he was, but had a most wonderful escape. Came through without a scratch.

JAP. But how do you know he's Braden?

BUCK. The Brannigans wouldn't make a mistake, would they?

JAP. Have they seen him, too?

BUCK. Certainly, and they're tickled to death about it.

JAP. (*Crosses L. end of table up*) I'd better see Mr. Rice immediately. (*Starts up*)

BUCK. Don't you want to meet my friend?

JAP. No, I'll meet him later. (*He goes out quickly. Takes hat and coat from rack*)

(BUCK knocks on door right.)

DAVE. (*Off*) What's the matter?

BUCK. It's me—Buck!

DAVE. All right. Just a minute. (BUCK crosses to chair at fireplace and throws coat and hat down.

DAVE enters right) Hello, old man. Look, your collar just fits me— isn't it fine?

BUCK. (*By chair near fire*) Do you know what time it is?

DAVE. No, and I don't care. It's the first decent sleep I've had in weeks. Soft bed, warm covers and a full tummy. Say, is breakfast ready?

BUCK. It's waiting for you. (DAVE starts but BUCK stops him) But first we must decide what we're going to do.

DAVE. How do you mean—decide? Didn't I say I'd string along with you?

BUCK. (*Brings DAVE down R. table*) Yes, but how far will you go?

DAVE. (*Down by table*) Any distance that will get me a soft bed like that and three square meals a day.

BUCK. (*Leaning over table back*) Then, listen. Dave, I think we're in line for a big killing.

DAVE. (*Sits*) How?

BUCK. This fellow Braden and the candy business that was left to him by old Hewitt. It's the chance of a lifetime.

DAVE. For who?

BUCK. For you—for both of us.

DAVE. How?

BUCK. They've taken you for Braden, haven't they? Well, all you've got to do is to stay Braden for a little while and we can clean up.

DAVE. You don't mean to say you're going through with this thing?

BUCK. Didn't you say you'd string along?

DAVE. Yes, but I don't want to do anything real crooked.

BUCK. What's crooked about it? Old Hewitt left the business to Braden, didn't he, and if Braden is killed, whom do we harm?

DAVE. How do you know he's been killed?

BUCK. (*Kneeling in chair left of table*) The first thing I did when I got up this morning was to get a paper and look through the list of survivors who came in on that relief train last night. Braden's name wasn't among them. Then I beat it down to the station and got next to the conductor who brought the survivors through and made up the list. He hadn't even heard the name before.

DAVE. Well?

BUCK. Don't you see? Braden was one of the victims of that wreck, but he can't be identified. He'll never be heard from again and here's a big candy business just waiting for somebody to fall into.

DAVE. But I don't know anything about the candy business.

BUCK. You can learn.

DAVE. In a couple of years.

BUCK. No, in a half hour. At least, all you'd have to know about it. Miss Anderson will be down in a minute and she'll give me all the inside dope.

DAVE. (*Rises and goes left*) We couldn't get away with a thing like that. Why, they'd ask me all sorts of questions and I wouldn't know what to say. Just take a good look at me. I'm a fine looking guy to be heir to a fortune. Ain't I? No trunk, no clothes, except what's on me. They'd be wise in a minute.

BUCK. The Brannigans weren't wise. (*Crosses to DAVE*) And besides, you were on that train and lost everything you had in the smash-up.

DAVE. I did?

BUCK. Sure. Let them prove you didn't.

DAVE. (*Takes newspaper from mantel*) Gee, I wish I had your nerve. (*Sits by fire*)

BUCK. It doesn't take nerve, or brains, either. All you have to do is to stand pat and let them do all the guessing.

DAVE. You've got a great line of talk, all right.

BUCK. I'm giving it to you straight. This is the chance we were looking for and it's up to us to either take it or go back to—to starvation.

DAVE. Oh! Don't say that, Buck!

BUCK. Well, what do you say?

DAVE. Let me get a cup of coffee first. Maybe I'll feel different with something in me. (*Up-stage. Puts paper on mantel*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*From left enters, center, effusively. BUCK crosses right below table*) Oh, good-morning. I didn't know you was up yet. (*She kisses him, smooths his hair, etc.*)

DAVE. (*Takes paper from mantel*) I must have overslept.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Oh, you needn't apologize. It was coming to you after the terrible experience you had on that train. (*Calls*) Nettie!

BUCK. She knows, Mrs. Brannigan.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Crosses to left of table*) That reminds me, Mr. Ryder, you promised to bring me something back last night.

BUCK. I know I did, but I didn't get to see the man I was looking for.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Skeptically*) That's what I thought. I suppose now you'll be saying good-bye right away.

BUCK. (*After a moment's hesitation*) Well, no—not if Mr. Braden here will help me out.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. What's he got to do with it?

BUCK. Just a moment. (*Crosses to MRS. BRANNIGAN*) Pardon me just a moment. (*MRS. BRANNIGAN crosses to front of table. BUCK crosses to DAVE*) Mr. Braden, I'm a little hard pressed just now and since I'm going to work for you, perhaps you wouldn't mind letting me have a little advance on salary.

DAVE. (*Throws paper in chair*) Sure—how much?

BUCK. Oh, just about \$65.00.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Why, I was only joking. (*Crosses left to DAVE. BUCK goes right, enjoying it*) I didn't know you were such friends, and of course if you're going to work for him—

DAVE. Sure, we're going to work together. (*MRS. BRANNIGAN turns sharply*) I mean he's been mighty nice to me and I appreciate it.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Then of course it's all right. Now you run downstairs and get something to eat.

DAVE. That's what I've been waiting for. (*Goes up center*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. So you'll feel better when Mr. Rice comes.

DAVE. (*Turns back*) Who is Mr. Rice?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. He's a lawyer and one of the executors for your estate.

DAVE. (*Looking at BUCK*) I didn't know I had to have a lawyer.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Why, of course. You couldn't get a cent without a lawyer. Charlie has gone to fetch him. He'll be here in a minute.

DAVE. I see my finish. Coming, Buck?

BUCK. No, thanks, Mr. Braden. I've had my breakfast.

DAVE. (*As he goes out left*) Well, don't go very far away, will you?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Comes to table, straightens magazines*) Course, you know we'll have to move you into the little inside room on the top floor. I'll have a cot put in for you.

BUCK. Any place will do me.

(BUCK down by left of sofa.)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Huh! It'll have to. (*As she turns up-stage, ANNA enters up center from stairs. She carries her hat as if about to go out*)

ANNA. (*In doorway*) Good-morning, Mrs. Brannigan.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Good-morning. I thought you'd gone.

ANNA. Just leaving now.

BUCK. May I see you a moment?

ANNA. (*Cross down L. to front of table*) Oh, hello, Buck.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*With a glance of contempt*) Huh! (*She exits center left. BUCK goes to ANNA*)

ANNA. (*Taking BUCK's hand*) I'm awfully glad you came back last night. You found your man, then?

BUCK. I found more than that. I found the chance I've been looking for, but I need your help.

ANNA. You must be joking.

BUCK. No, I'm not: I mean it.

ANNA. But how can I help you?

BUCK. That's what I'm going to explain, but first I want you to tell me that you'll stick; that no matter what happens you'll come along.

ANNA. Why, Buck—

BUCK. That's right, you started me, and whatever I do is going to be for you—it's got to be for

you. If it comes off and I make a pile quick, you'll share it with me. Is that understood?

ANNA. Why, of course.

BUCK. Well, then, if I play my cards for all they're worth, I can land a big position right in the same office with you.

ANNA. Oh, Buck!

BUCK. But to do it I must have all the information I can get about the Hewitt stores. I've got to be in a position to help this boy, to make him need me. Now, you've been with the firm a long time. You know all the inside stuff and any little tip you can give me——

ANNA. Yes, indeed, I'll help you all I can.

BUCK. That's the talk.

BRANNIGAN. (*Heard in hall R.*) Come in, Mr. Rice.

ANNA. Oh, there's Mr. Brannigan. And I mustn't be late at the office. (*Goes toward door up C.*)

BUCK. (*Follows her*) But you haven't told me all I want to know.

ANNA. Then walk over with me. He can talk on the way.

BUCK. I can't come just this minute. I've promised Mrs. Brannigan I'd move into another room. I'll be over later. (*Gets hat and coat*)

ANNA. Oh, I do hope I can help you get this position. Perhaps Mr. Braden has brought you luck at last.

BUCK. It isn't all Braden, girlie. It's you.

BRANNIGAN. (*Up C., enters from right*) Hello! I thought you'd gone.

BUCK. (*Cross to BRANNIGAN*) No, I'm staying on for a while. It's all fixed.

BRANNIGAN. Indeed?

BUCK. Yes, ask your boss.

BRANNIGAN. Who?

BUCK. Your wife.

BRANNIGAN. I shall. Come in, Mr. Rice.

(RICE enters up c. BUCK crosses, and whispers with ANNA.)

RICE. (*Puts hat on table, crosses D. R.*) Where is——?

BRANNIGAN. He must be downstairs. I'll go and see. (*He goes out left*)

ANNA. (BUCK crosses D. L.) How do you do, Mr. Rice. (*Cross R.*)

RICE. Bless me if it isn't Miss Anderson? (*Shakes hands. Down R.*)

ANNA. Yes, sir, and this is Mr. Ryder.

BUCK. (RICE crosses) How do you do, Mr. Rice. I suppose you came to see Braden. He's having his breakfast.

RICE. Don't disturb him. I don't mind waiting. (*Crosses L. takes off coat, puts it on chair*)

(BUCK crosses up L. a bit.)

ANNA. Well, I must be going along. (*Goes up c.*) Good-bye, Mr. Rice.

RICE. Good-day, Miss Anderson. Good-day.

BUCK. (*Up c. Shakes ANNA's hand. ANNA goes out right and BUCK comes down to RICE D. L.*) Oh, Mr. Rice, perhaps I ought to tell you. Mr. Braden—he's rather nervous—being mixed up in that wreck, you know——

RICE. Was he hurt?

BUCK. No, not a bit—just upset.

RICE. Naturally.

BUCK. Just wanted you to understand in case he acted queer or strange.

RICE. Of course, of course.

BUCK. He'll be up in a minute.

RICE. That's quite all right. (*After a short pause, Mrs. BRANNIGAN enters from L.*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Hello, Mr. Rice!

(BUCK crosses R., around table.)

RICE. Good-morning, madam. (*Takes her hand*)

BUCK. I'm going to move my things right now, Mrs. Brannigan. (*Exit up c. to L. up-stairs*)

RICE. (*To Mrs. BRANNIGAN*) Where is our young friend?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. He's just finishing. Didn't you bring my niece Norma along? (*Cross R.*)

RICE. No, I thought it better to wait until after I'd seen him myself.

BRANNIGAN. (*Enters from left, escorting DAVE. DAVE has napkin tucked in collar*) Here it is. (*DAVE sees RICE. Starts to exit c. BRANNIGAN turns him back*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Front of sofa. BRANNIGAN crosses to her*) Come right in, Mr. Braden. Meet Mr. Rice.

RICE. (*Going up to the reluctant DAVE*) Well, well. (*Bringing DAVE down L. c.*) So this is the young man, eh? I'm very glad to see you, sir.

DAVE. Thanks. (*Down L. Takes his hand limply*)

RICE. You've had a most remarkable experience—most remarkable—

DAVE. I should say I have!

RICE. But I'm thankful it was no worse. It might have been, you know, it might have been. You've had a very narrow escape. No ill effects, eh? You're feeling all right this morning?

DAVE. Well, I'm kind of nervous.

RICE. Naturally, that was to be expected. (*Eyeing DAVE reminiscently*) Yes, there's quite a resemblance. (*To BRANNIGAN*) Don't you see it?

(*Takes DAVE's chin in left hand and indicates with right*) Same eyes—curve of the mouth. (*To DAVE as he slaps him on back*) Fine fellow, your father. I knew him years ago.

DAVE. You did?

RICE. We went to night-school together. He never mentioned that to you, I suppose.

DAVE. No, I never saw him nights.

RICE. Oh, well, it was before your time, my boy, before your time. (*Jabs DAVE in ribs*) Well, let's get down to business. Will you sit there, please, while I ask you a few questions? (*Crosses R. above table*)

DAVE. (BRANNIGAN *sits on sofa R. L.*—DAVE, *uneasily*) Where's Buck?

RICE. Who?

DAVE. Buck—I left him here a minute ago.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. He means Mr. Ryder. He's taken a fancy to him because he was the first to meet him last night. (*Sits sofa L. end*)

BRANNIGAN. Huh! Wait till he knows him better.

(MRS. BRANNIGAN *punches* BRANNIGAN.)

DAVE. I'd feel easier if he was around.

RICE. (*Takes out wallet, lays it on table. Crosses to DAVE*) Tut, tut, there's no occasion to feel nervous. This is merely a necessary formality and I want you to believe that I am quite as much your friend as I am your legal adviser. Now, sit down, please. (*DAVE sits L. of table*) We will be as brief as possible. Just a few questions, that's all. (*Sits R.*)

DAVE. Hadn't we better wait till Buck comes back?

BRANNIGAN. Certainly not. This is purely a private matter between ourselves.

DAVE. Yes, but I don't know what you want me to do.

RICE. (*Takes out papers*) Nothing that will cause you any strain. Mostly a matter of form. Will you let me have your papers, please?

DAVE. (*Puts napkin on table*) Papers?

RICE. Certificate of birth, identification card prepared by your attorneys—surely you have them?

DAVE. No, don't think I have.

RICE. What have you done with them?

DAVE. I don't know.

RICE. You did have them?

DAVE. I suppose so, but I must have lost them.

BRANNIGAN. Lost them? (*Up*)

RICE. Impossible.

DAVE. Oh, yes, I lost everything I had in that smash-up. (*Catches breath after he says "smash-up"*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Up*) Don't you remember where you put them?

DAVE. They might have been in my trunk. You see, I lost my clothes and everything I had.

RICE. Dear, dear, this is most unfortunate.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. What'll we do?

RICE. I suppose we'll have to wait until we have communicated with his attorneys and instructed them to send on duplicates. (*To DAVE*) I suggest that you wire them at once. (*DAVE rises*) We can do nothing further until they arrive.

BRANNIGAN. (*Crosses to R. of RICE*) Can't we vouch for him? Why, you've just said he's the image of his father. And so long as we know who he is—

RICE. (*Up*) No, no, Mr. Brannigan, you must realize how impossible that is. Even if we were personally convinced of his identity, we could do noth-

ing for him without documentary proof. The law is very strict on that point. (*To DAVE*) You understand, my boy—(*Crosses to DAVE. Puts wallet in his pocket*) This is no reflection on you. We must wait, that's all. (*DAVE sits L. of table. RICE D. L.*)

BRANNIGAN. Just a minute. (*To DAVE, as he crosses back of table*) Did you say those things were in your trunks?

DAVE. I'm sure of it.

BRANNIGAN. Well, that's easy enough. The baggage car came through all right. Give me the check for the trunk, and I'll have it brought right up.

DAVE. Didn't I tell you I lost everything?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. The check, too?

DAVE. Didn't save a thing.

BRANNIGAN. You could identify it, couldn't you? Must have your name or initials on it.

DAVE. Yes, but now that I think of it, those papers may not have been in it.

BUCK. (*Puts coat and hat over hall balustrade. Enters center cheerily*) May I come in?

DAVE. (*Crosses up to BUCK*) Gee, I'm glad you're here! (*Up*)

BRANNIGAN. (*Backs to R. C.*) Mr. Ryder, this conference is private—and——

DAVE. (*To BUCK down L. of table*) No, it isn't. Come on in.

BUCK. (*BRANNIGAN straightens chair R. of table*) What's the matter? Anything wrong?

DAVE. (*L. of BUCK*) Yes, there are some papers I ought to have, and I've lost them.

BUCK. Lost them?

DAVE. I lost everything I had in that smash-up, you know—smash-up!

BUCK. That's too bad.

RICE. Mr. Brannigan has suggested that the trunk might be found among the baggage at the station.

BUCK. (*Starts up*) Good idea. I'll go down with you and help pick it out.

BRANNIGAN. I can save Mr. Braden all that trouble.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Certainly, let Charlie go. He's got nothing else to do.

BUCK. Perhaps Mr. Braden prefers to go to him?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. No, no, Mr. Rice wants to talk, to him, and it'll save lots of time.

BRANNIGAN. You will also please to remember that Mr. Braden is our guest.

(*Bell rings.*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Hurry up, Charlie.

BRANNIGAN. Yes, my dear. (*Goes up.* DAVE and BUCK *cross below table c.*) What kind of a trunk is it?

(BRANNIGAN *crosses to DAVE below table.*)

DAVE. Why, it's a trunk with—with lots of things in it and——

BRANNIGAN. A big one?

DAVE. No—just medium.

BRANNIGAN. (NETTIE *cross L. to R. in hall*) Square or curved top?

DAVE. (*Knots his fist, BUCK restrains him*) Ain't that funny? I can't remember whether it's got a curve or not.

BRANNIGAN. Well, I won't have any trouble finding it if it has your initials on it. (*Cross R. around table to up R. of door*)

NETTIE. (*Enters c. followed by postman*) He's in here. (*To others*) Registered letter for Mr. Braden. (*She goes out again*)

POSTMAN. (*Crosses down to L. of table*) Which is Mr. Braden?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. This gentleman.

DAVE. What is it? What is it?

POSTMAN. Registered package for Jericho W. Braden. That's you, is it? (*Gives letter*)

BUCK. (*Takes letter*) That's him.

POSTMAN. (*BRANNIGAN crosses down toward MRS. BRANNIGAN*) Sign here, will you? (*Offering card to DAVE*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Pushes BRANNIGAN up-stage. Fixes things on desk up L. c.*) You needn't wait, Charlie.

BRANNIGAN. I'm going, my dear, I'm going. (*He goes out to R. Gets hat and overcoat from rack*)

POSTMAN. Get busy, will you? I've got a long route to cover.

DAVE. Where do I sign?

POSTMAN. On this line. Your full name. Jericho W. Braden. (*Gives DAVE card*)

DAVE. (*To BUCK*) How do you spell Jericho?

BUCK. (*Shows DAVE name on envelope. Sotto voce*) You damned fool!

(*DAVE signs; postman gives the card.*)

DAVE. What, another?

POSTMAN. Yep. (*DAVE signs. Same business of looking at envelope in BUCK's hand. Postman takes card from DAVE*) Thanks, that's all. (*Goes out center to R.*)

DAVE. That's enough.

BUCK. (*Reading inscription on envelope*) From Holt, Einstein and Necker, attorneys at law, Walla Walla.

(*MRS. BRANNIGAN comes down to L. of sofa.*)

RICE. (*A little towards DAVE*) Holt, Einstein, say, that's your firm, my boy. It might contain the very things we need.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Aren't you going to open it?

BUCK. (*Starts to open, hands it to DAVE. To DAVE*) You open it.

DAVE. (*Starts to open*) I guess Mr. Rice had better open it. (*Handing package to RICE*)

RICE. (*Taking it*) Certainly, if you wish it. (*They all watch him intently as he takes the contents out of the package and examines them. Turns L.*) Bless my soul, we have everything here. Birth certificate, identification—all that is necessary. (*RICE puts papers in pocket*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Claps her hands. BUCK repeats gesture*) You must have left them behind and they've sent them on.

RICE. They couldn't have come at a more opportune time. My boy, I congratulate you. (*Shakes DAVE's hand*) This will enable me to put you in possession at once. (*Up for coat on chair before fire*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. And Charlie's gone after the trunk. I'll send Nettie down to tell him. (*She runs out center to L.*)

DAVE. What do I have to do now?

RICE. (*Down L.*) Make yourself ready. I'll take you over to the Hewitt office and introduce you to the heads of the various departments. (*Puts on coat*)

DAVE. Can't my friend come with me?

RICE. Certainly. Bring anybody you like.

DAVE. Well, come on, Buck, let's get a crowd.

RICE. (*Crosses to table for hat*) My boy, you can't know what a relief this is to me. Not that I doubted you for a moment, but—well, I congratulate you. (*Shakes DAVE's hands*) It's a wonderful stroke of fortune, and I know you'll prove yourself worthy of it. I congratulate you again. (*Crosses up to L. Shakes hands*)

BUCK. (DAVE puts right hand behind back. BUCK takes it and shakes) Me, too, it's great!

RICE. (Coming down front of table. Pausing suddenly) Oh, by the way, perhaps it would be just as well to have you meet Miss Noggs before we go. She lives only a short distance from here.

DAVE. Miss who?

RICE. Miss Noggs, your fiancée.

DAVE. My what?

RICE. She has been very anxious to see you, but I thought it inadvisable to have you meet until these other matters were out of the way.

DAVE. What has she got to do with me?

RICE. (Surprised) My boy, don't tell me that your attorneys have left you ignorant on such an important point.

DAVE. You mean I'm supposed to marry some girl?

BUCK. What did you expect to marry? A hippopotamus?

RICE. She is a very sweet and charming young lady. I've known her mother for a great many years. You're sure to find each other congenial. (Starts up. DAVE grabs him, and brings him down-stage)

DAVE. But wait a minute—when do I have to do this?

RICE. Your marriage must take place within a period of six months dating from Mr. Hewitt's death.

BUCK. That's easy.

(RICE and DAVE come down.)

RICE. Of course, your presence here would indicate that you were prepared to accept that condition of the will.

BUCK. Certainly—he understands that. (To DAVE) Don't you, old man?

(DAVE looks at him and then walks away. Crosses L. to fire, too full for utterance. Leans against mantel, back to audience.)

DAVE. Oh, yes I understand it——

RICE. It's not very far! I'll bring her back with me. (He goes out center to R.)

BUCK. (R. of table, leaning over it) Isn't it immense? I tell you—(Crosses up to arch c.) it's coming our way at last.

DAVE. (Turns with a deliberation that chills BUCK's enthusiasm) Buck, it's cold.

BUCK. What is?

DAVE. This whole thing. I can't go through with it.

BUCK. (Crosses down to DAVE) Don't be a fool.

DAVE. A fool, eh? How'd you like to be tied to a dame that had to be taken in trade like a prize package?

BUCK. I'll be tickled to death at the chance.

DAVE. (Crosses to R. BUCK follows) Well, here's your chance. I stake you to her—yes, and to this whole business. I don't want any part of it.

BUCK. Say, what's the matter with you? If you didn't intend to go through, why did you lead us all on like this? (Front of table R.)

DAVE. I didn't know what I was letting myself in for. And when it comes to marrying a girl that I don't even know——

BUCK. But you don't have to marry her!

DAVE. (Sits on sofa) You heard what old fizzle-face said, didn't you?

BUCK. (Crosses to L. of sofa) He said six months. Well, a lot can happen in six months.

DAVE. You know it!

BUCK. All you have to do now is to say you'll marry her.

DAVE. It's no use, Buck. I thought I could go through with it, but I can't.

BUCK. Oh, just because a girl is mentioned you're going to lay down, are you?

DAVE. 'Tisn't only the girl—it's the game. We can't get away with a thing like this. (BUCK *impatiently crosses to front of table. Rises*) That registered package didn't come here by chance, and I've committed forgery already. (*Down to R. of BUCK*)

BUCK. Forgery?

DAVE. Didn't you make me sign for that letter?

BUCK. That's done every day in the week.

DAVE. I signed another fellow's name just the same.

BUCK. Oh, you make me tired! (*Crosses L. DAVE starts to get hat on stand R.*)

BRANNIGAN. (*Enters C. from R. quickly. Crosses to back of table*) Well, I got your trunk.

BUCK. His trunk!

DAVE. What?

BRANNIGAN. (*Crosses down to DAVE*) And you were right about it. Little square one—dark brown.

DAVE. Must be a mistake.

BRANNIGAN. No, it's got your name on it—spelled out.

DAVE. How'd you get it?

BRANNIGAN. Oh, just explained the circumstances to the baggage-master and he let me take it. Where'll I put it?

DAVE. Aw! Put it in——

BRANNIGAN. In your room?

DAVE. Yes.

BRANNIGAN. Give me the key and I'll open it for you.

DAVE. I'll be there myself in a minute.

BRANNIGAN. All right. (*He goes out right again*)

(*DAVE and BUCK look at each other for a moment.*)

DAVE. I'm going away from here. (*He starts for door, but BUCK seizes him*)

BUCK. What for?

DAVE. Don't you see what's going to happen?

BUCK. What?

DAVE. First that registered package and now the trunk. Why, that guy will be here before we get to the corner.

BUCK. I don't think so.

DAVE. I don't care what you think, I'm going.

BUCK. (*Bringing DAVE D. R.*) Don't be a fool. Those things coming as they did just prove what I've thought. There's no doubt now that Braden was on that train.

DAVE. You bet he was.

BUCK. Yes, and he was killed. Fate has thrown this thing right into our hands. Don't you see, Dave? All we have to do now is to play the game straight.

DAVE. How can we play the game straight, if it's crooked? (*Sits on sofa*)

BUCK. (*Leans over end of sofa*) There's the trunk. Rice has the papers which prove you are Braden. They've accepted you for him. Nobody'll ever know any different!

DAVE. If I listen to you any more, I'll go bug-house.

NORMA. (*Enters center from R. A very pretty blonde girl of the ingenue type. She is followed by RICE, who crosses back of table. She greets BUCK effusively*) I'm so glad to meet you at last! (*Down R.*)

BUCK. Thanks, but I think you've got the wrong fellow.

(DAVE rises and starts toward door R.)

RICE. That gentleman is Mr. Ryder. This is Mr. Braden. (*Down L.*)

NORMA. (*To BUCK*) Oh, excuse me—I'm sorry.

BUCK. (*Crosses to RICE back of table c.*) Don't mention it.

NORMA. (*Crosses to DAVE*) You're Jerry Braden, aren't you? (*DAVE goes to door R.*) I might have guessed it, only I didn't see you first.

DAVE. (*Taking her hand*) How are you?

NORMA. Don't you know who I am?

DAVE. Sure.

NORMA. Well, then, aren't you going to kiss me?

DAVE. (*Looks at BUCK, who motions him to go through with it*) What?

NORMA. I'm your fiancée, you know. (*She holds up her lips to be kissed, and DAVE pecks at them*) My, you're awfully shy, aren't you? But then—Western men are so different.

RICE. (*Starts to c.*) Mr. Ryder and I will wait outside)

BUCK. Sure.

DAVE. No, what for? (*Crosses up*)

RICE. (*Exit c. to L.*) You must have something to say to each other.

BUCK. Yes, and you'll have a chance to get acquainted.

DAVE. Don't leave me alone.

BUCK. Oh, we'll be back—we'll be back. (*Exits c. to L.*)

DAVE. Have a heart!

NORMA. (*Sits right end of sofa*) You're not afraid of me, are you?

DAVE. No, but I had something important to tell Buck.

NORMA. Buck? Is that what you call him?

DAVE. I'd hate to tell you what I'd like to call him.

NORMA. There's a lot in names. Yours just fits you. I think "Jerry" is terribly cunning.

DAVE. (*R. of table*) Jerry sounds like half a drink.

NORMA. Come on over here and sit by me. (*He hesitates.* NORMA R. DAVE L. *As he sits by her*) You know, I'm awfully glad you're good-looking.

DAVE. Did you take a good look?

NORMA. Now I won't have to pretend at all.

DAVE. Pretend?

NORMA. Of course, it wouldn't have made any difference, but I'd made up my mind if you weren't nice I'd pretend to like you anyway.

DAVE. Why?

NORMA. So you wouldn't feel badly about it. It must be awful to be married to a woman who doesn't like you.

DAVE. Oh, you're going to marry me, are you?

NORMA. No, you're going to marry me?

DAVE. What's the difference?

NORMA. A girl can't ask the man, can she?

DAVE. I don't know—you're a new one on me. (*They laugh. He looks up-stage at door*)

NORMA. (*Sitting back comfortably*) Anyway, it's so much nicer to have it all arranged for us like this, don't you think so?

DAVE. It doesn't seem to matter what I think.

NORMA. Oh, yes it does, because I want you to like me.

DAVE. That's not very hard. You're young and pretty, and if it wasn't for this money thing you might shape up all right.

NORMA. It's the money that makes it so easy.

It's so much easier to be in love when one is comfortable.

DAVE. Gee, but you're mercenary.

NORMA. Not at all. I'm just sensible. Mother says that money is the only thing that counts, and she ought to know because we've been as poor as church mice all our lives. Anyway, we don't have to think of that, do we?

DAVE. No! Why not?

NORMA. Because you like me and I like you.

DAVE. But you wouldn't like me if I wasn't Braden, would you?

NORMA. Oh, yes I would.

DAVE. But you wouldn't marry me.

NORMA. I might.

DAVE. If I didn't have a cent?

NORMA. Yes.

DAVE. (*Takes her hand*) Oh, gee.

NORMA. If mother didn't object.

DAVE. (*Walking away L. Below table*) I thought there was a string to that.

NORMA. But what's the use arguing about it? Mother doesn't object and we're going to have lots of money. (*Crosses to DAVE below table*) When do you think we ought to get married?

DAVE. (*In front of table c.*) Oh, in about six months.

NORMA. Not before?

DAVE. Well, if you feel that you just can't live without me, fix it up to suit yourself.

NORMA. Oh, goody. (*Pats his cheek, kisses him*) I'm awfully glad. (*Kisses him. DAVE hugs her*)

DAVE. You're some girl, all right! (*Does a couple of fancy steps over left—straightens tie, etc. Tries to button coat—bus.*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Enter center. Down R. NORMA extreme R.*) My dear girl, I'm so glad to see you. Isn't it wonderful, the escape he had?

NORMA. Too wonderful for words.

(RICE enters followed by BUCK. RICE crosses to back of table. Puts down hat. BUCK crosses D. L. to DAVE.)

RICE. Have you finished?

NORMA. (Going to RICE) Yes, he's left it all to me.

RICE. I knew you'd have your own way.

BUCK. (To DAVE, extreme L.) How about it?

(L.)

DAVE. I'm going through.

BUCK. Fine! (They shake hands)

RICE. (Back of table) I think we'd better all go along now. It's nearly noon.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. I'm ready. Where's Charlie?
(BRANNIGAN enters. Crosses down between sofa and table) Where have you been?

BRANNIGAN. I was waiting for Mr. Braden. Thought he wanted to open his trunk. (R.)

BUCK. By the way, Mr. Rice, you might be interested to know that Mr. Braden has appointed me his general manager.

RICE. What?

BUCK. Fact.

BRANNIGAN. General manager? (Down R. left of MRS. BRANNIGAN)

RICE. Isn't it rather sudden?

BRANNIGAN. I object. I most decidedly object.

BUCK. Where do you come in to object to anything?

BRANNIGAN. I won't have my niece's money squandered on a man like you.

DAVE. (Cross to BUCK—to RICE) It's going to be my money, isn't it?

RICE. (L. of table) Really, I think you ought to consider such an important matter, quite seriously.

DAVE. I can't do without Buck; he's got to be my manager.

RICE. With all due respect to Mr. Ryder, I think you're placing him in a very responsible position.

DAVE. That's just what I want. I want him to have all the responsibility—and a good salary, too. How much salary do you want, Buck?

BUCK. Why—I hadn't thought.

RICE. The position of general manager carries a fixed salary.

DAVE. That's all right. You have no objection to a fixed salary, have you?

BUCK. Oh, no indeed.

DAVE. And you can fix mine, too.

RICE. Your allowance will cover that.

DAVE. Allowance? How much allowance is it to be?

RICE. Don't be alarmed. It will be sufficient for your needs until the conditions of the will are met.

DAVE. It's all right as long as it's fixed.

RICE. However, we can discuss all this some other time. Do you think we can find a taxi near here?

(DAVE joins NORMA back of table. BUCK crosses D. L.)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Certainly. Charlie, run and fetch a taxi.

BRANNIGAN. We can't all get in one taxi.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Then get two taxis.

BRANNIGAN. Oh! Very well. (*Exits*)

DAVE. Has anyone got an extra overcoat? Mine is at the cleaner's.

MRS. BRANNIGAN. I'll make Charlie give you his.

DAVE. That'll be nice. (*RICE crosses to front of sofa. MRS. BRANNIGAN goes out center, follows JAP, who says "How d'ye do?" He glares at*

DAVE, *who passes him unconcernedly, and then comes down L.*)

BUCK. Hello, Walter. You missed all the excitement.

JAP. (*Takes off hat*) That so? (*L.*)

BUCK. Yes, you know Miss Noggs—and Mr. Rice—

JAP. I've been looking for Mr. Rice. (*Down L.*)

RICE. For me?

JAP. Yes, sir. I went to your office, but you weren't—(*Crosses to R. to RICE*) there, so I called at the Hewitt stores and Miss Anderson told me she had left you here. May I see you a minute?

RICE. Well, we are just leaving—

JAP. This is very important.

RICE. Very well. (*Goes up to NORMA and escorts her into the hall L.*) Norma, dear, would you mind joining Mrs. Brannigan for a moment?

BUCK. (*Crosses left to table*) I just want to tell you that I've got something at last.

JAP. (*Takes off coat and puts hat and coat on chair R. of table*) That so?

BUCK. Braden has made me his general manager.

JAP. What?

BUCK. I've been looking for a chance like this all my life and Braden has given it to me.

JAP. What do you know about Braden?

BUCK. I know all about him. And we're going to make this business hum.

JAP. (*Takes step R.*) Don't make me laugh.

BUCK. Nothing to it. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. You're a pretty good sort and I'd like to do something for you. How would you like to work for us?

JAP. (*Turns quickly*) What?

(*RICE enters.*)

BUCK. I'll start you off on ten a week and you'll get practical experience.

RICE. (*Crossing down L. of table*) Will you excuse us, Mr. Ryder?

BUCK. Certainly. (*Crossing up R. of table*) What do you say?

JAP. I'll think about it.

BUCK. All right. The job is open for you at any time. See you later. (*Takes hat and coat and goes out center, turning toward the street*)

RICE. Well?

JAP. (*Crosses front of table*) It's something you won't believe. It's about this fellow who calls himself Braden.

RICE. Who calls himself?

JAP. Exactly: he's a crook. He's no more Braden than you are.

RICE. My dear young man, I must ask you—

JAP. I know what I'm saying and I can prove every word of it. I tell you this fellow is an impostor.

RICE. How do you know?

JAP. Because I'm Jerry Braden.

RICE. (*Turns L.*) You? Impossible.

JAP. I didn't expect you to believe me.

RICE. Yes, but I've seen his papers. The birth certificate—everything.

JAP. They were mine. They were intended for me. He's got my trunk, too. I went down to the station and they told me that somebody had already called for it.

RICE. But if what you say is true—?

JAP. It is true. See here. (*Takes letter and card from pocket*) Here are some letters from my attorneys. (*RICE looks at papers*) Here's my identification card. There's my picture on it. You don't have to take my word for it.

RICE. But what possible reason could you have

had for concealing your identity? You've been here several days.

JAP. I can't go into that now, but I had a good reason for it, all right.

RICE. (*Handing back his papers*) I really must have something more to go on than this.

JAP. What more do you want? You knew my father. He told me that you went to night-school together. Surely you are willing to help the son of your old friend?

RICE. I am if you can give me better proof.

JAP. Let me ask you something. Has anybody vouched for this impostor?

RICE. If you mean Mr. Braden——

JAP. I mean this impostor. How did he get here anyway?

RICE. I believe that Mr. Ryder was the first to meet him.

JAP. Don't you see? They framed it up between them. Why should he make Ryder his general manager—a man he never saw before? Does that seem reasonable to you?

RICE. Perhaps not, but I've always heard that western boys are unusually impulsive. (*Turns away to L.*)

JAP. Western? I'll bet he's never been further West than Joliet.

(ANNA enters in hall from R.)

ANNA. Is Mr. Ryder here?

JAP. (*Suddenly, as he sees ANNA in hall*) Oh, Miss Anderson.

ANNA. Yes?

JAP. Just a minute. (*To RICE*) Now, I'll show you something.

ANNA. (*Coming down right*) Yes?

JAP. (*At left of table*) Miss Anderson, you were

Mr. Hewitt's confidential secretary for several years and attended to his private correspondence?

ANNA. Most of it.

JAP. Do you remember a gift that Mr. Hewitt sent to young Braden's father about two years ago?

ANNA. I think so.

JAP. What was it?

ANNA. It was a gold watch.

JAP. Would you recognize it if you saw it?

ANNA. I ought to—Mr. Hewitt had worn it ever since I knew him.

JAP. (*Taking watch from pocket and showing it to her*) Is that it?

ANNA. (*Cross look at watch*) Yes, where did you get it?

JAP. (*Triumphantly to RICE*) Now are you satisfied?

RICE. Bless my soul, I don't know what to do!

JAP. The principal thing to do now is to nab this fellow before he gets out of the house.

RICE. But how?

JAP. Get a policeman and have them both arrested for conspiracy.

RICE. Both of them?

JAP. Certainly. Ryder is just as guilty as the other fellow. I'll watch them until you get back.

ANNA. Ryder—guilty?

RICE. Yes, that'll be best. Bless my soul, I never dreamed of such a thing as this. (*Gets hat from table. He goes out. JAP cross to below chair by fire*)

ANNA. (*Crossing toward door up c. Then down to JAP*) What is he going to do? Of what is Buck guilty?

JAP. I'm sorry, Miss Anderson, but you may as well know now, because it will all come out in court anyway. Ryder has gotten himself in bad. He has

conspired with this other fellow to get hold of a business that doesn't belong to him.

ANNA. (*Crosses toward JAP*) Why, it can't be. I don't believe it.

JAP. You believe I'm Braden, don't you?

ANNA. I suppose you are if Mr. Rice says so, but I know that Mr. Ryder wouldn't do anything wrong. I'm sure he's innocent.

JAP. (*Turns away*) Well, he'll have to prove it.

ANNA. He will prove it. I'll find him and bring him here. (*She crosses up*) He'll convince you that he's done nothing wrong. (*She goes up-stairs, as BRANNIGAN appears center*)

BRANNIGAN. (*Enters c. from R. with hat, gloves, muffler, but without overcoat*) I've got the taxi. Two of them. Where is everybody?

MRS. BRANNIGAN. (*Enters c. from L.*) I'm ready.

BRANNIGAN. You know, these taxis charge for every minute. (*He goes out right*)

MRS. BRANNIGAN. Where's Mr. Braden? (*Goes off R.*)

NORMA. (*Coming from left with DAVE. DAVE wears BRANNIGAN'S overcoat*) I've got him. He's going to sit with me.

DAVE. Wait till I get my hat. (*Runs down, stands above sofa R.*)

NORMA. Oh, hello, Mr. Walter.

JAP. 'Morning, Miss Noggs.

NORMA. (*Up c. near door, stopping DAVE*) Just a minute, Jerry. (*Turns him into room. DAVE goes to her, and takes her hand*) Oh, Mr. Walter?

JAP. Yes.

NORMA. (*Takes DAVE down to JAP*) I want you to meet my fiancé.

JAP. Your what?

NORMA. Mr. Braden. We're going to get married, you know.

JAP. Married? To him?

DAVE. Yes, I'm going to be little hubby. Come on, girlie. Come on—come on. (*Turns and goes out R. NORMA starts to follow*)

JAP. Oh, Miss Noggs! (*She turns, comes down L. of table*) Did you say you were really going to marry that fellow?

NORMA. Certainly.

JAP. Why, that fixes the whole thing. Hurray! (*Crosses C. R.*)

NORMA. Why, what's the matter? (*L. of table*)

JAP. When are you going to do it? (*Crosses below table*) Marry him, I mean.

NORMA. I won't know till I see mother. She'll want us to wait, I suppose, but I don't believe in long engagements, do you?

JAP. No, not in this case.

NORMA. So many things can happen. That's why I think we ought to get married in a month or so. Don't you think that's a good idea?

JAP. It's a wonderful idea. But why wait a whole month?

NORMA. What?

JAP. Why not in a week—to-morrow?

NORMA. (*Backs away a step*) Oh, that wouldn't be decent. We've only just met.

JAP. Well, as soon as possible, anyway.

DAVE. (*Entering quickly up C. from R.*) Come on, girlie. They're waiting for us.

(*NORMA crosses up L. of table.*)

JAP. (*Circles R. around table; grabs DAVE, and brings him down R.*) I congratulate you. I congratulate you both. I think it's great. Immense.

DAVE. Thanks. You'll excuse me—

JAP. Sure, run along! (*Goes R.*)

DAVE. (*As he goes up with NORMA*) Who is

that crazy guy? (*As they pass RICE, who seizes his arm, having entered quickly*) Oh! Mr. Rice. The taxis are here.

RICE. Yes, I saw them. But I want to see you.

NORMA. Then you'll have to see him outside. Everybody is waiting. (*She goes out with DAVE R.*) Come on.

DAVE. Good-bye—good-bye.

RICE. (*Back of table*) Where is he going?

JAP. He's going to the office to begin his career as boss of the Hewitt candy stores.

RICE. Then we're just in time to prevent him. I have an officer waiting outside to arrest him. (*Goes up*)

JAP. Stop him! Don't let that officer touch him.

RICE. What? (*Crosses down L.*)

JAP. (*Crosses c. to RICE*) I don't want them molested, do you understand? Let them go as far as they like. Nobody is to know anything about this. Tell that cop there's nothing doing.

RICE. Yes, but for what reason?

JAP. The best reason in the world. He's going to marry her.

RICE. What?

JAP. (*Catching himself. Goes R. a step*) No—no, I mean—

ANNA. (*Coming down-stairs, crosses R. of table*) I couldn't find him but you've got to give him a chance.

JAP. That's just what I'm going to do. I'm going to give them both a chance.

ANNA. You are, really?

JAP. But on one condition. That you don't let them know that any of us suspect them. Is that a bargain?

ANNA. Yes.

JAP. No word, no sign—no warning—your word of honor.

ANNA. My word of honor.

JAP. Fine. (*Auto horn*) So long, I've got to catch up with them. (*Gets hat and coat. Crosses up c.*)

RICE. Where are you going?

JAP. (*Exit up c. to R.*) I'm going to work for them.

Curtain

ACT III

SCENE: *The offices of the Hewitt Candy Stores. The entrance to office is through a door U. C., on either side of which are deepset shelves containing candy boxes and other samples of the firm's products. D. L. is another door which leads to the other offices and shipping department. U. R. is a practical window which opens on the fire-escape, and through which can be seen the buildings on the opposite side of the street. U. R. is a safe, set in the wall; this safe is practical and constructed for a breakaway. There is a desk on the right side of stage and another U. L., both having telephones and the usual writing materials.*

AT RISE: BUCK is discovered seated back of desk at R. A CLERK, who is standing back to audience, writes on pad. DAVE is seated at desk U. L. busily engaged in opening his mail.

BUCK. (*Writes out order, and handing it to clerk*) Give that to Mr. Strawbridge and tell him to get it out at once.

(CLERK takes the order from BUCK and starts away.)

CLERK. (*As towards door c.*) Yes, sir?

DAVE. (*Suddenly rising with an open letter in his hand*) Here, wait a minute.

BUCK. (*As the CLERK stops and turns inquiringly to DAVE*) What's the matter now?

DAVE. You know that letter I sent to the Secretary of the Navy?

BUCK. What letter?

DAVE. Telling him the quickest way to make the men stop drinking in the navy was to have them eat our peanut brittle?

BUCK. Yes—and I told you you were crazy.

DAVE. Crazy, eh? Well, here's an order for one hundred thousand pounds, that's all.

BUCK. Gee whiz!

DAVE. We are doing business with the Government, my boy. (*Handing letter to the CLERK*) Shoot this down to the shipping department, and tell them to send it to the Paymaster at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. (*CLERK takes the letter and goes out c.*) Guess I'm not some business man!

JAP. (*Entering D. L. crosses to c.*) Say, Ryder—(*Has order blank and pencil in hand—Coat and vest off*)

BUCK. Yes?

JAP. What do you want me to do about that Fleighenheim Department Store order?

BUCK. What's the matter with it?

JAP. They say they won't accept it unless it's packed in their own boxes and labelled "Fleighenheim's Special Candies."

BUCK. Why weren't they shipped that way in the first place?

JAP. Must have been a mistake in the shipping department.

BUCK. That's Strawbridge again. If we hadn't promised Mr. Rice to keep everybody, I'd fire that old fellow mighty quick. (*Interrupted by telephone*

bell ringing. Taking up the receiver on telephone desk R.) Hello—who? Yes, he's here. (*Offers the telephone to DAVE*) For you, Mr. Braden.

JAP. (*Stepping forward*) For me?

BUCK. No: Mr. Braden.

JAP. (*Recovering himself*) Oh!

DAVE. (*Crosses to 'phone—and with mouthful of candy*) Hello—yes, this is Mr. Braden. Who is this, please? What—Mrs. Sinclair?

BUCK. (*Quickly*) She's President of the United Welfare Societies!

DAVE. (*At telephone*) Oh, yes—the young Mrs. Sinclair. How are all the little welfare children? I remember you quite well. Yes, I know all about that order. How many? Eighty thousand pounds of mixed? (*JAP and BUCK are overwhelmed*) Will that be enough?—Oh, certainly, you can increase it at any time—Yes, I will have it sent over to your headquarters immediately—I'll carry it over myself—Thank you—How are the children?—Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver*)

JAP. Gee, that makes over two hundred thousand pounds for that one society alone.

BUCK. That's the result of our minimum wage advertisement.

DAVE. Oh! I don't know. I have a way with these ladies.

JAP. Say, if business is so good, don't you think I could get a little more money?

DAVE. What's the idea? You're getting more than you're worth now. (*Telephone rings desk L. DAVE at telephone*) Hello, Hewitt Candy Factory—Mr. Braden, proprietor, speaking—Who?—Yes, he's here—Who wants him? Won't give your name—Oh, it's a secret? (*Turns to JAP*) Some lady wants to speak to you, Walter.

JAP. To me? (*He takes the 'phone*)

(BUCK comes around desk to R. of DAVE.)

DAVE. (*Turning to BUCK—both are R. of 'phone*)
That's the third time to-day.

JAP. (*At telephone*) Oh, hello—what?—No, I can't get over just now—I know you are lonesome but please have a little patience—(*He becomes conscious of the two boys watching him intently*) I can't say anything over the 'phone. I'll be back around five. (*Hangs up receiver*)

BUCK. (*Accusingly*) Is that business?

JAP. No, just a friend of mine.

DAVE. Yes, a lady friend—at the Hotel Raleigh.

JAP. How did you know?

DAVE. She calls you up about five or six times a day.

BUCK. Now take our advice and cut her out.

JAP. How do you mean?

DAVE. No man can attend to business and have his mind on a woman.

JAP. Yes, but—

BUCK. You needn't explain. Just take our tip and cut her out.

DAVE. Cut her out.

JAP. (*Hesitates for a moment, then accepts the inevitable*) Thank you, gentlemen. (*Exits D. L.*)

DAVE. (*Going L.*) Can you beat his nerve? Monkeying around with dames on his salary!

BUCK. (*Crosses to his desk R.*) That's the only thing I don't like about him.

DAVE. (*At water cooler*) You know, it wouldn't surprise me at all if that fellow turned out to be a crook.

BUCK. Oh, nonsense.

DAVE. (*Starts to take drink at water cooler*) Well, I don't like my employees having women call them during business hours. It's not being done.

(CLERK *enters through center door.*)

CLERK. Excuse me, Mr. Braden, but Miss Noggs wants to see you.

DAVE. Miss Noggs—where is she?

CLERK. Downstairs in an automobile.

DAVE. Tell her I'll be right down. (CLERK *exits* c. DAVE *takes hat and coat from rack*) Well, I guess I'll call it a day. (He *starts for center door*)

BUCK. Where are you going?

DAVE. Joy-riding.

BUCK. (Trying to stop DAVE) Here, wait a minute.

DAVE. Oh, you always spoil my pleasure. (Coming down center) What's the matter now?

BUCK. (Comes around desk to R. of DAVE) I'll tell you what's the matter. You're making a joke of this whole business.

DAVE. How do you mean?

BUCK. This girl. You're rushing her as if it were the real thing.

DAVE. It is the real thing.

BUCK. What?

DAVE. I'm off my dip about her. Honest—she's got me clean daffy.

BUCK. Say, you haven't gone bughouse, have you?

DAVE. I don't know—I'm in love, all right.

BUCK. What?

DAVE. Nothing to it. I'm gone—I'm all hers. (BUCK *turns away in amazement*) You know you ought to sympathize with me. When a fellow is in love, he's just helpless.

BUCK. What about the girl? Suppose she falls in love with you?

DAVE. No suppose to it: she does.

BUCK. She does?

DAVE. We're going to be married, too.

BUCK. You are?

DAVE. Sure, we decided on that the day we first met.

BUCK. But that was supposed to be a stall.

DAVE. Well, it hasn't worked out that way. Anyway, she's entitled to all this money.

BUCK. Certainly.

DAVE. And it's the only way I can give it to her.

BUCK. That's not a bad idea. I've been worrying a good deal about that little girl and this money thing. This way she'll get the whole business.

DAVE. Oh, you'll come in for a share, too.

BUCK. No, Dave, I'll be content to string along on a salary. I'm thankful enough to be where I am and have my feet on the ground.

DAVE. I'm going to have my feet in an automobile.

CLERK. (*Enters center*) Miss Noggs wants to know if you're coming down?

(BUCK crosses to his desk.)

DAVE. Sure. (*Goes up as CLERK goes out and turns to BUCK*) She's sore. Now, you see. I'll blame it on you. (*Goes out center*)

BUCK. All right.

ANNA. (*Enters L. and goes to DAVE's desk*) I think I left my memorandum on Mr. Braden's desk. (*Gets memorandum*) Yes, here it is. (*Starts toward door D. L.*)

BUCK. Oh—er—Anna, what's your hurry?

ANNA. I have a lot of work to get out before closing time.

BUCK. You used to do a lot of work in here.

ANNA. I've found out that I do more work out there. (*She starts for door*)

BUCK. Don't go. I want to talk to you. (*Starts around desk to her. He stops as DENISON enters*)

through center door) Yes, sir, what can I do for you? (*To DENISON*)

DENISON. (*Coming down to R. of him*) Are you Mr. Braden?

BUCK. No, sir. My name's Ryder.

DENISON. I'd like to see Mr. Braden.

BUCK. He's not in, but I'm his manager.

DENISON. My business is personal. When will he be in? Half an hour or so?

BUCK. Perhaps.

DENISON. I'll call again. (*He turns up-stage*)

BUCK. Want to leave any word?

DENISON. No.

BUCK. Name?

DENISON. (*Stops and looks at ANNA*) Oh, he wouldn't know me. I'll try again later. (*He goes out center. BUCK is mystified for a moment, then turns to ANNA*)

BUCK. Ever see that man before?

ANNA. Not that I remember.

BUCK. H'm, wonder what he wanted? (*Then quickly to ANNA as she turns to leave*) Just a minute, Anna. (*Meets her at desk L.*) Now, I don't like the way you've been treating me lately. What's the matter? Aren't you satisfied with the way we're running the business?

ANNA. (*Evasively*) I ought to be.

BUCK. You ought to be, but you're not. Come on, let's have it out. What's on your mind?

ANNA. Nothing—really——

BUCK. (*Holding her firmly*) You can't fool me. I've done something to make you unhappy. Why, you avoid me every chance you get. I never get to speak to you alone any more. Even last night when I waited to take you home you insisted on bringing Walter along with you. Now, why is it?

ANNA. I wish you wouldn't ask me, Buck.

BUCK. I've got to know, Anna. You know what

I think of you and you must feel the same toward me, or you wouldn't have acted as you did that night at the Brannigans'. Why have you changed? You must have some reason for it. Don't you care for me any more?

ANNA. Oh, yes, it isn't that——

BUCK. Then why don't you marry me? I'm getting a decent salary now, enough to keep us going, and when the business is turned over to Braden I'll get a bigger one.

ANNA. There are so many things I must know first.

BUCK. You took me on trust in the beginning.

ANNA. (*Starts to go*) That was different. Oh, please let me go, Buck.

BUCK. Just one thing and I'll be satisfied. Do you love me?

ANNA. (*After a pause*) Yes.

BUCK. (*With an impulsive movement to take her in his arms*) You darling!

ANNA. (*Breaking away*) No, no, not now. (*Runs out left, leaving BUCK puzzled*)

RICE. (*Enters c.*) Mr. Braden in?

BUCK. No—he's out with a little squab.

RICE. A squab?

BUCK. (*Back to door R. Faces up-stage. Box in hand*) Yes: Miss Noggs.

RICE. Oh, yes, of course, of course.

(JAP enters down L. quickly.)

JAP. Say, Ryder—(*He sees that RICE is about to speak to him, and hastily lifts a warning finger*) I can't do anything with Strawbridge. (*BUCK turns to him*) He's grouching about that peanut brittle order—says he won't send it to the Government unless it's paid for in advance.

BUCK. That old fellow is getting on my nerves.

I'll have a talk with him. Excuse me, Mr. Rice, I'll be back in a minute. (BUCK goes out D. L.)

JAP. (*Turns smilingly to RICE*) Well?

RICE. Well, how far do you intend to let this thing go?

JAP. Haven't decided.

RICE. See here, you don't seem to realize the position you are placing me in. I'm getting decidedly uncomfortable. If I'd had any idea——

JAP. (*Soothingly*) Now, don't lose your seat, Mr. Rice. Everything is coming along splendidly. The business is increasing by leaps and bounds. Everybody is satisfied; why shouldn't you be?

RICE. Every reason in the world. Besides being distasteful, this whole business is unprofessional, to say the least.

JAP. Why is it? You are my attorney and getting paid for it, and so long as I'm not kicking——

RICE. What about Miss Noggs?

JAP. What about her?

RICE. She's running around with this impostor. She's out with him at this moment—she might even get to like him——

JAP. (*Complacently. Crossing R.*) I think she does.

RICE. Then she ought to be warned before it is too late.

JAP. (*Sits on corner of desk R.*) Not at all. If she likes this fellow, that's her affair; and if she wants to marry him, well, I can't very well stop her, you know.

RICE. Ah, I see now what's in your mind. In the event of her marrying someone else, the entire estate would revert to you.

JAP. (*Rises, crosses to RICE*) Now, hold on, Mr. Rice, I have my own reasons for wanting things to go on as they are at present—but cheating Miss

Noggs out of her share of the estate is not one of them.

RICE. Whatever your intentions are, I can't allow you to go on taking such chances with money belonging to Miss Noggs. These impostors are dangerous.

JAP. The money is not in their hands—they can't raise thirty cents on a check unless it is countersigned by Strawbridge. And you've told *him* what to do.

RICE. Strawbridge can't watch them every minute, and these men are not fools.

JAP. No. But don't forget I'm on the job myself. Now, leave this to me. I know what I am doing.

STRAWBRIDGE. (*Off L.*) We *will* see about it, Mr. Ryder, and at once.

BUCK. (*Off L.*) I am the manager here, and the sooner you realize that the better for you.

STRAWBRIDGE. (*Entering through door L. followed by BUCK*) Where is Mr. Braden? I must have this matter settled.

RICE. Hello, Strawbridge.

(JAP goes around BUCK's desk and up to window.)

STRAWBRIDGE. Ah, Mr. Rice, I am very glad to see you here. You understand my position with Mr. Hewitt. Perhaps you will be good enough to tell this young man?

BUCK. It isn't necessary for Mr. Rice to tell me anything. I am in charge and you must take orders from me.

RICE. (*Crosses to BUCK*) One moment, please. There is evidently some misunderstanding.

BUCK. No misunderstanding at all. This business has got to expand along new lines, and anybody that tries to stop it has got to get out.

STRAWBRIDGE. Just as I expected. Get rid of the has-beens, and start all over with a lot of kids.

RICE. Come, come, Strawbridge, don't lose your temper.

STRAWBRIDGE. I'm not going to allow a young whippersnapper to destroy a business that Mr. Hewitt gave his entire life to build up.

BUCK. "Destroy!" Can you beat that fellow?

RICE. You mustn't mind the old man. He's a bit hasty, but he doesn't mean all that he says. (*Turns to STRAWBRIDGE*) I know it's a bit difficult to adjust one's self to new conditions, Strawbridge, but under the circumstances, I should advise a little patience—

STRAWBRIDGE. Patience be——!

RICE. Tut, tut! You have nothing to gain by that attitude. Now, apologize to Mr. Ryder and do as he asks you.

STRAWBRIDGE. Apologize!

RICE. (*Catching his eye*) Remember, I'm speaking to you as an old friend.

STRAWBRIDGE. (*After a moment's pause*) Very well. I'm sorry.

(*RICE crosses up-stage a little.*)

BUCK. All right, we'll let it go at that. (*Crosses over to his desk*) But if you want to stick around here you'd better kill that nannie of yours.

STRAWBRIDGE. Don't blame me if things go wrong. (*He turns L.*)

BUCK. (*Sits at desk R.*) I won't.

RICE. (C.) Oh, Strawbridge. (*STRAWBRIDGE stops, and RICE turns to BUCK. To STRAWBRIDGE*) Just a word. (*To BUCK*) Do you mind if I have a chat with the old fellow?

BUCK. Talk his head off if you think it'll do him any good.

RICE. Thank you. (*He turns and goes out L. with STRAWBRIDGE. They ad lib. on exit*)

JAP. (*Who is slightly above BUCK's desk*) By the way, Ryder, I want to talk with you about something.

BUCK. Good Lord, are you going to kick, too?

JAP. Not exactly; but you two fellows said something to me a while ago and I thought——

BUCK. (*Sits at desk R.*) I know what you're going to say. You aren't getting enough money. All right. We'll raise you five a week. That's good enough, isn't it?

JAP. Yes, but——

BUCK. Don't thank me. I know what you need it for.

(*NORMA enters, center door, followed by DAVE. They are both attired for automobiling.*)

NORMA. (*Takes stage c.*) Hello, everybody!

DAVE. Here we are.

(*JAP crosses back of desk L. to D. L.*)

BUCK. It's about time you got back.

NORMA. Oh, I've had the loveliest time!

DAVE. Oh, say! You ought to see the little car that I bought Norma. It's a pippin.

JAP. You haven't bought an automobile?

DAVE. Sure. Got to live up to my position.

NORMA. A beautiful Pierce-Arrow.

BUCK. But you know Rice won't allow you to spend that much money. Walter, you'd better tell Rice about this. Wait a minute, I'll tell him myself. (*Crosses to door L.*) I don't want to get in a row about it. (*Goes out L. with JAP*)

DAVE. And tell him there's no come-back either—we've just got to have an automobile. (*Crossing*)

quickly to door) And, Buck, nix on a Ford! (*Hangs up hat and coat. Cheerfully*) He'll fix it for us, Norma. Buck can get anything he goes after. He's the greatest little fixer in the business. (*He gets a box of candies from desk L.*) Here, see what I've got for you. Look!

NORMA. (*Below desk L. c.*) What are they?

DAVE. Taste one.

NORMA. (*Tastes candy*) Oh, kisses!

DAVE. "Norma's Kisses", see? See your picture on the cover. (*He displays the cover of the box*)

NORMA. (*Throws her arms around his neck*) Aren't you sweet? (*She sits on desk L., and takes box. DAVE jumps up beside her*)

DAVE. Yeah! I'm going to get them out for a holiday special. They can't help eating what's inside when they see what's outside. Now, let me taste one. (*She offers him the candies, but he puts them aside*) No—regular one! (*Kisses her*) Gee, if we could only put those on the market.

NORMA. You know, Mr. Ryder may be right about that automobile. It is frightfully expensive.

DAVE. What do I care about expense! I've got all the credit I want. I'll buy you a house if you want it.

NORMA. What kind of a house do you think we ought to have?

DAVE. On the Lake Shore Drive—with a million rooms in it.

NORMA. No, I'd rather have a cottage in the country—just big enough for us two.

DAVE. In the country? Say, that would be great!

NORMA. With morning-glories climbing up the sides.

DAVE. Yes. And we could have a cow and a lot of little chickens.

NORMA. And I would just love to have a lake.

DAVE. What kind of a lake?

NORMA. A lake, a little lake, with swans——

DAVE. Swans! Oh, you mean those long-necked goose things?

NORMA. Swimming around on it. That wouldn't cost much, would it?

DAVE. What, the lake? Nothing at all. Water is the cheapest thing there is.

NORMA. That would be lovely.

DAVE. I used to live in a cottage right near water, and it was full of all sorts of things.

NORMA. What, the cottage?

DAVE. No, the water.

NORMA. Oh, you mean in Walla-Walla.

DAVE. No, in—(*Recollecting himself*) Yes, in Walla-Walla.

NORMA. What does everybody do out there?

DAVE. Where? In Walla-Walla? (*She nods*) Why, they just Walla-Walla. (*They laugh*) Ain't I the comic?

NORMA. You are funny.

DAVE. Say, Norma, you're on the level about that little cottage with the morning glories and swans and things?

NORMA. Of course.

DAVE. It isn't just because I am Braden and have this business? You would love me anyway, wouldn't you?

NORMA. If I could only just have you and the morning-glories, I wouldn't care if I never had anything else.

DAVE. Oh, it's a pleasure to give you anything. (*He embraces her*)

RICE. (*Heard off-stage*) No, no, Mr. Ryder, it isn't possible. (*Enters, followed by BUCK D. L. NORMA jumps down from desk; DAVE picks up 'phone*) I'm sorry, but I have a duty to perform.

DAVE. Good-bye. (*Puts down 'phone*)

BUCK. But what difference does it make?

RICE. All the difference in the world.

DAVE. Did you tell him about the car?

BUCK. (*Crosses back to DAVE's desk R.*) It's cold.

RICE. (*To DAVE, as BUCK goes up-stage and crosses to his desk*) My boy, it must be returned. I can't permit any such sum to be spent.

DAVE. We don't have to pay for it right away.

NORMA. And we would have to have one when we are married.

RICE. Then wait until you *are* married. (*To DAVE*) You had better return the car and exercise a little patience. (*Crosses up c.*)

DAVE. Now, don't worry about it, girlie. He can't make me do anything I don't want to do. (*Crosses to end of desk R.*)

RICE. Come, Norma, it is getting late, and your mother will be anxious. (*He goes up to door*)

NORMA. Oh, bother! (*Gets candy box. To DAVE*) Coming over to-night?

DAVE. (*At BUCK's desk R.*) Sure thing. Say, why can't we all go home in my car; it's waiting downstairs?

RICE. (*Coming down to DAVE*) Once for all, young man, I think——

DAVE. Now, don't do an ymore thinking, because that car is mine, whether it gets paid for or not.

RICE. Very well. But the Hewitt Estate will never pay for it with my permission. Good-day, gentlemen. Come, Norma. (*He goes out center*)

NORMA. (*Getting up*) Aren't you coming?

DAVE. (*Crosses up to NORMA*) Yes, I'll see you downstairs.

BUCK. (*Quickly, to DAVE*) Don't go. I want to see you.

DAVE. Back in a minute.

BUCK. (*Very firmly*) Now!

DAVE. (*To NORMA, taking her hand*) Then I won't see you downstairs.

NORMA. (*Holding his hand*) To-night, then.

DAVE. Yeah. Good-bye.

NORMA. Good-bye.

DAVE. (*Reaching forward and kissing her as she turns to go through door*) Good-bye. (*Then as he slowly closes the door, he heaves a deep sigh and turns to BUCK*) What's the matter, Buck? What's on your mind?

BUCK. (*Starts around desk—with a warning signal as STRAWBRIDGE enters from L.*) Sh!

DAVE. Oh, hello, Straw—

STRAWBRIDGE. (*Enters L. with money-bag on his shoulder and blank check in his hand*) Mr. Walter told me you were here, sir.

BUCK. What do you want?

STRAWBRIDGE. Mr. Braden's signature on this check; it is the pay-roll for the Stores to-morrow. (*Crosses to c.*)

DAVE. (*Taking and signing check*) That's the best thing I do. (*Hands it to STRAWBRIDGE*) There you are.

STRAWBRIDGE. (*Going toward center door*) Thank you.

DAVE. Where are you going with that?

STRAWBRIDGE. To get it cashed. It saves us much time arranging the envelopes in the morning. (*He chuckles at BUCK and goes out center*)

BUCK. (*Cross to c. Suspiciously*) Did you get on to the smile? Why this sudden change?

DAVE. What's the matter with him?

BUCK. Had a scrap with him a moment ago. Now he's laughing. You know, I am afraid of that fellow. (*Goes down R.*)

DAVE. Get rid of him—let him go.

BUCK. That would get Rice down on us. They are old friends.

DAVE. (*Rises and crosses to BUCK*) I think you just imagine these things. You are losing your nerve.

BUCK. Maybe. I caught him grabbing confidentially to Rice out there a minute ago. I think they're both on to us.

DAVE. Wouldn't Rice say something if he knew?

BUCK. Not if he has some reason for letting us run along.

DAVE. What do you think we had better do?

BUCK. I don't know, but I have a feeling that something is going to happen. (*Turns just as he sees DENISON entering center door*) Hello, here's the fellow that wanted to see you. (*BUCK crosses L.*) How do you do?

DENISON. (*Crosses D. C.*) Are you Mr. Braden?

DAVE. That's me.

DENISON. Can I see you for a moment?

DAVE. You are looking at me.

DENISON. (*Glancing at BUCK*) Alone!

DAVE. Mr. Ryder is my general manager.

DENISON. My business is personal.

BUCK. Mr. Braden has no secrets from me.

DENISON. This is strictly private.

DAVE. Oh, very well, Buck, if he thinks it important.

BUCK. Just as you say, Mr. Braden. (*With a suspicious glance at DENISON as he goes out L.*)

DAVE. (*Going nervously to the seat behind BUCK's desk*) Well, what is it—what is it? (*Very business-like*)

DENISON. Do you mind if I sit down?

DAVE. (*Looks over bunch of letters*) No, of course not. Help yourself.

DENISON. (*Sits down deliberately in front of*

desk; takes note-book and papers from his pocket
Mr. Braden, my name is Denison.

DAVE. Glad to know you, Mr. Denison. (*Yawns*)

DENISON. (*Continuing*) Of the Denison Detective Agency.

DAVE. (*Swallows hard*) Detective!

DENISON. I have been retained by Holt, Einstein & Necker, of Walla-Walla. They are your attorneys, are they not?

DAVE. I—Yes, I suppose so.

DENISON. (*Quickly*) You suppose so!

DAVE. Well, you see, I am not living out there any more and,

DENISON. Yes, I understand that. But they did represent you when you came into this business—before you came East.

DAVE. Yes.

DENISON. That's what I thought. Mr. Braden, why didn't you let them know that you had arrived here?

DAVE. I thought they did know.

DENISON. Well, they didn't. In fact, they had an idea that you had been mixed up in that wreck near Omaha a month ago. Didn't know you were here until they saw it in the newspapers.

DAVE. Oh, I am sorry about that.

DENISON. (*Taking out card and paper*) Oh, that's all right now. But before they did know about it they got in touch with us and asked us to investigate for them.

DAVE. Too bad to have to put you to all that trouble.

DENISON. No trouble: that's our business. But I had to see you personally so that I could assure them you were all right. (*He takes slip from his wallet and places it in front of DAVE*) I want you to sign this, if you don't mind.

DAVE. (*Suspiciously*) What's that for?

DENISON. Just my voucher—which proves I taked to you personally. We have to send that in with our bill.

DAVE. (*Greatly relieved*) Oh, I see. (*He signs the slip and hands it back. DENISON takes it, rises and moves center, at the same time comparing slip DAVE has signed with a registered card which he has previously taken from his pocket*)

DENISON. (*DAVE rises crosses to below desk*) By the way, Mr. Braden, you received a registered package from them a month ago?

DAVE. (*Starts to light cigarette*) Did I?—Oh, yes, think I did.

DENISON. You signed for it, didn't you?

DAVE. Yes, I think so.

DENISON. Yourself?

DAVE. I—I don't remember.

DENISON. (*Comparing signatures again*) Guess you did! They are both in the same writing.

DAVE. Well, then, I did. (*Belligerently*) What's the idea of these questions, anyway?

DENISON. (*Coming close to him and speaking firmly*) I am trying to find out why your signature here is different from the one you had out West. (*Shows DAVE a letter*) Your attorneys sent this one on to us and it doesn't tally with this slip that you have just signed.

DAVE. (*Nonplussed for the moment*) What do you want me to do about it?

DENISON. (*Sharply*) I want you to explain it.

DAVE. Let me see the one they sent you. (*DENISON hands it to him and watches him closely*) Why, of course. They aren't alike. *This* one isn't mine.

DENISON. Not yours?

DAVE. No.

DENISON. Now, how did they make that mistake?

DAVE. I don't know.

DENISON. You are sure that you never signed this?

DAVE. Positive.

DENISON. That's funny. Well, I won't trouble you any more, Mr. Braden, and I am obliged to you for this voucher.

DAVE. (*Greatly relieved. Going back to desk*) Don't mention it, Mr. Denison. And if there is anything else I can do for you, let me know. I'll write those boys out at Walla-Walla and let them know just how it happened.

DENISON. (*Stopping at center door*) Oh, you are living with the Brannigans, aren't you?

DAVE. Yes.

DENISON. I will let them know that, too. Good-day.

DAVE. So long! (*DENISON goes out center; DAVE runs up to door and looks out to see that he is really gone; then becomes almost panic-stricken as he comes down toward door L. shrieking*) Buck! Buck!

(BUCK enters quickly.)

BUCK. Is he gone?

DAVE. You were right about this thing. We're up against it. We've got to make one getaway.

BUCK. (*Crosses toward door up c.*) What did he want?

DAVE. He is a detective.

BUCK. A detective!!

DAVE. Hired by Braden's attorneys in Walla-Walla. The receipt I signed for the registered package with the papers—you remember?

BUCK. Yes.

DAVE. Well, the signature they had in Walla-Walla doesn't tally with the signature they had here,

so they sent it on to the Detective Agency to find out the reason why.

BUCK. You didn't give yourself away, did you?

DAVE. He got me to sign something before I was wise.

BUCK. Great Scott! (*He crosses down right and goes up around desk back to center, with DAVE following him excitedly*)

DAVE. Oh, I know I'm a nut. But there's no use crying about it. We've got to do something quick.

BUCK. Oh, gee! (*He stops suddenly; then crosses in front of desk L. and continues in a subdued tone. Sits at desk L.*) I hate to let go, just as we have things running so nicely. I've been so interested in this business that I haven't even thought of money.

DAVE. What'll we do, Buck?

BUCK. I don't know. It's rotten luck, though—getting a wrong start. Why, I'd even dreamed that our work here might lead to a future and a home—with Anna. Well, there go my dreams. (*Crosses L.*)

DAVE. There go my morning-glories!

BUCK. (*Turning quickly*) What morning-glories?

DAVE. Norma wanted them with swans on them by the cottage, and the lake——

BUCK. This isn't the time to think of cottages and morning-glories. We've got to do something quick.

DAVE. I know, but what?

BUCK. The only safe place for us now is Canada.

DAVE. Canada! But how are we going to get there? I haven't any credit with the railroad company.

BUCK. Haven't you any money?

DAVE. No, I've over-drawn my allowance already.

BUCK. And I haven't enough for a taxi. Oh! If it were only to-morrow and I had my salary!

DAVE. We can't wait till to-morrow. We've got to get away to-night.

BUCK. Well, we'll just have to raise it somewhere, that's all.

DAVE. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make out a check for your salary and get Strawbridge to countersign it and cash it right away.

BUCK. (DAVE goes to desk L.) Good idea! (Crosses to chair by desk R. STRAWBRIDGE enters C.) Look out. Here he is now. (Crosses above desk to chair)

(STRAWBRIDGE crosses to safe, and puts in money. Starts for door L.)

DAVE. Oh! By the way, Straw——

STRAWBRIDGE. Yes, sir!

DAVE. (Down to R. of STRAWBRIDGE. BUCK comes round to front desk R.) Here's a little check for Mr. Ryder's salary. Just put your name to it and get it cashed right away for me, will you?

STRAWBRIDGE. Sorry, sir, but the bank has closed for the day.

DAVE. You've just put some cash in there, haven't you?

STRAWBRIDGE. Just the necessary amount for the pay-roll. Can't disturb that. I'll get this for you in the morning. (Crosses to L. Exit)

BUCK. (Crosses DAVE to L.) Didn't I tell you he was on?

DAVE. Think so!

BUCK. I'm sure of it.

DAVE. Then let's take it ourselves.

BUCK. No, that would be stealing.

DAVE. How do you make that out? It's coming

to you, isn't it? Just think what you've done for this firm.

BUCK. It's stealing, just the same. I won't touch it.

DAVE. Well, then, what are we going to do? If we stay here, we'll be pinched.

BUCK. I don't see why? We haven't done anything really wrong.

DAVE. They'll just consider us a couple of crooks, and send us up for a long term.

BUCK. What's the use, Dave? We couldn't get that money even if we wanted to. The safe is locked.

DAVE. I'll get the combination.

BUCK. How?

DAVE. From Strawbridge. I'm the boss. I'll ask him for it.

BUCK. Won't he suspect?

DAVE. If he does, he won't give it to me. And we will know he is on. We haven't anything to lose, and it's our only chance. I'll ring for him. (*Goes up to desk R. BUCK stops him*)

BUCK. Here, wait!

DAVE. (*At desk R.*) Now, you got me into this and you've got to get me out.

BUCK. (*Crosses up to desk L.*) Oh! All right, go ahead. (*DAVE rings buzzer*) Make some excuse—be casual about it. (*BUCK crosses to desk L.*)

(*After a short pause, STRAWBRIDGE enters.*)

STRAWBRIDGE. (*Crosses to c.*) Want me, sir?

DAVE. (*Sits at desk R.*) Yes. It just occurred to me that if anything happened to you, we wouldn't be able to open the safe.

STRAWBRIDGE. Nothing *has* ever happened to me, sir.

DAVE. No, but it might. And I'd like to have the combination, just in case.

STRAWBRIDGE. (*Hesitates a moment; glances at BUCK, who turns quickly away; then says quietly*) Certainly, sir; I will write it out for you. (DAVE *front of desk, puts down the numbers and hands slip back*) Anything else?

DAVE. No, that'll be all, Strawbridge, that'll be all.

(STRAWBRIDGE *goes out L. The moment he is out of sight, both boys plunge for the paper.*)

BUCK. (*Crosses to DAVE D. R.*) Got it?

DAVE. (*Rises, and starts toward safe*) Yes. Let's see if it works.

BUCK. (*Stopping him*) Not now. Somebody might see us. You've got a key to the office, haven't you?

DAVE. Yes.

BUCK. We'll come back to-night when nobody is around and get what we need—just enough to take us across the border. Is that understood?

DAVE. Sure.

BUCK. And afterwards we'll tell the girls just exactly what's happened—they've got to know everything, you know.

DAVE. Sure.

BUCK. Good. Then I'll look up the trains on the Grand Trunk, and you go pack your stuff.

DAVE. (*Crosses to get hat and coat*) I'll have time to see Norma, won't I?

BUCK. Yes. And tell her the whole truth, then if she is willing to come along with us, have her meet us at the house at nine o'clock.

DAVE. Want me to wait at the Brannigans'?

BUCK. No, I have a lot of things to attend to. Meet me at the corner restaurant.

DAVE. I'll run over and see Norma now.

BUCK. The whole truth, remember—no side-stepping.

DAVE. Not me: I'm going through with this.
(*Exits center*)

BUCK. (*Goes up and gets his hat and coat and turns toward the center door; then remembering ANNA, he stops and starts toward door L.*) Oh, Anna, Anna! (*JAP enters door L.*) Hello, Walter.
(*Turns and goes to center door*)

JAP. Going home?

BUCK. Yes, it's after five.

JAP. See you to-morrow.

(*STRAWBRIDGE enters D. L., with hat and overcoat.*)

BUCK. (*As he goes out*) Perhaps.

JAP. (*Crosses up toward door c. puzzled*)
"Perhaps!" (*Then dismissing it from his mind, becomes more cheerful*) Are we the last?

STRAWBRIDGE. No, sir—Miss Anderson is still here.

(*JAP strolls down to desk R., lights cigarette, getting match from desk, while STRAWBRIDGE continues looking at him. JAP turns and notices his expression.*)

JAP. What's your trouble?

STRAWBRIDGE. Mr. Rice has told me everything, sir.

JAP. You mean—about me?

STRAWBRIDGE. Yes, sir.

JAP. Oh, that's a pity.

STRAWBRIDGE. No, sir. I'm glad.

JAP. Well, so long as you know—

STRAWBRIDGE. How long is this to go on, sir?

JAP. I don't know. They are pretty good boys, and I hate to lose them.

STRAWBRIDGE. Believe me, sir, they are not to be trusted.

JAP. How do you know?

STRAWBRIDGE. He asked me for the combination of that safe—just after he had seen me put the payroll in it.

JAP. When?

STRAWBRIDGE. Just a minute ago.

JAP. You didn't give it to him?

STRAWBRIDGE. Yes, sir, I did.

JAP. (*Starts toward STRAWBRIDGE*) Why?

STRAWBRIDGE. (*Hastily*) But I didn't give him the right one, sir.

JAP. (*With relief*) Oh!

STRAWBRIDGE. I didn't think it wise.

JAP. Quite right. (*He turns to sofa*) I wonder what he wanted it for. (*Suddenly the possibilities dawn on him. Keeps his eyes on safe*) Strawbridge, let me have your key to the front door.

STRAWBRIDGE. Are you coming back?

JAP. I may want to. Let me have it.

STRAWBRIDGE. Certainly, sir. (*Takes key off his chain and gives it to JAP*) Anything else, sir?

JAP. That is all.

STRAWBRIDGE. Good-night, sir.

JAP. Good-night. (*STRAWBRIDGE goes out center. JAP goes toward the safe in perplexity, then goes to 'phone on desk R., picks it up, waits an instant, and sets it down and crosses to door L. and opens it*) Miss Anderson—

ANNA. (*Off L.*) Yes?

JAP. Just a minute, please. (*Crosses R.*)

ANNA. (*Enters*) Oh! Has everybody gone?

JAP. Miss Anderson, have you said anything to Ryder that would lead him to think that we suspect him?

ANNA. No—why?

JAP. You've kept your word to me? You haven't warned them?

ANNA. You know that.

JAP. Well, somebody has tipped them off. They're on.

ANNA. That can't be. I was just talking to Mr. Ryder a short time ago. If he'd had any suspicion he'd have told me.

JAP. Then why did he ask old Strawbridge for the combination of that safe?

ANNA. When?

JAP. Not ten minutes ago. Just after they'd seen him put the money in it.

ANNA. I don't understand?

JAP. (*Crosses to desk R.*) I do, and I'm going to protect myself.

ANNA. (*Crosses to him*) What are you going to do?

JAP. (*Picks up 'phone*) Notify the police.

ANNA. (*Holds telephone*) No—no—wait, please. Their asking for the combination doesn't prove that they are going to make bad use of it.

JAP. I'm not taking any chances.

ANNA. But you can't have them arrested for that.

JAP. I can have them watched, can't I?

ANNA. We can watch them ourselves. We'll find they're all right. I know we will.

JAP. If you really think that, you wouldn't be afraid.

ANNA. I'm not afraid.

JAP. Well, if they *are* all right the police can't harm them.

ANNA. But I want you to give him a fair chance.

JAP. He's had his chance and what he does with

it from now on is up to him. (*Takes 'phone from her*) Hello—hello—get me Police Headquarters.

Curtain

SCENE II: *After the lapse of a few moments, the curtain rises again upon the same scene.*

It is night and the stage is dark, except for the light which comes through the window. After a moment's pause, center door opens and DAVE enters, followed by BUCK; they speak in lowered tones.

DAVE. (*Crosses to D. C. to right*) Gee, I'm scared.

BUCK. Nothing to be afraid of. Have you got that paper?

DAVE. Yes.

BUCK. Then hurry up. The sooner we are out of this place the better I'll feel.

DAVE. (*Goes to safe and kneels*) I can't see. It's too dark.

BUCK. Here, I'll light a match. (*He lights a match and holds it over DAVE*) Can you see now?

DAVE. Yes. You hold the paper and give me the numbers.

(*BUCK takes the paper and reads; DAVE repeats as he turns combination.*)

BUCK. To the right, fifty, twice, next thirty-seven, twice——

DAVE. I've got it. (*BUCK suddenly drops the match*) What's the matter?

BUCK. Burnt my finger, damn it.

DAVE. Aw! Never mind your finger. Come on!

BUCK. (*Lights another match*) Fifty twice—thirty-seven twice—next——

DAVE. Yes, I've got that. Hurry up.

BUCK. Then back to twenty three times—
(Pause) Now, left to fifteen—

DAVE. Fifteen—yes.

BUCK. Open it!

DAVE. Yeah! Open it. (*Tugs at the door but it doesn't budge*) It won't open.

BUCK. Oh, you're a hell of a burglar! (*Takes him by the arm, pushes him aside to L. and kneels*) Here, you make a light and let me work it.

(DAVE comes up behind him, and striking a match, reads from paper.)

DAVE. Are you ready?

BUCK. I know: right fifty, twice.

DAVE. (*Suddenly*) What's that?

BUCK. What?

DAVE. I heard something. (*They listen intently*)

BUCK. (*With a growl of disgust*) You're hearing things again, are you? Here, give me that paper. You're no use at all. (*He takes the paper and works alone at the lock, while DAVE goes over to door L. and peeks out furtively*) Thirty-seven—then to twenty—and fifteen—(*BUCK tries to open the door in vain; then he rises*) I'm damned! (*Backing away*)

DAVE. (*Coming center*) Won't it work?

BUCK. No, it's a bunk. Strawbridge has put one over on us.

DAVE. (*Crosses to c.*) Gee! Then I'll bet it's a plant.

BUCK. If it is, then we'll have to make a fight for it.

DAVE. (*Suddenly as he sees shadow of burglar on walls*) What's that?

BUCK. What?

DAVE. (*Crossing up a bit, looks off R.*) There is someone at that window.

BUCK. Duck! (BUCK drops down below desk R. DAVE runs over L. and hides back desk L. Burglar cuts glass out of window and enters. He flashes lamp, goes to center door, looks out cautiously, then comes down center and his light cautiously appears from behind desk L. and BUCK locks it and then decides to make sure—exits. DAVE rises from behind desk R. DAVE backs into BUCK and is startled) It's a burglar!

DAVE. (Stammers) A burglar? What's he after?

BUCK. Probably knows about the pay-roll—and he's going after it. Let's grab him.

DAVE. No—wait.

BUCK. Wait? What for?

DAVE. *Wait—until—he opens—the safe. (Noise off L.)* Quick! He's coming back! (They hide behind desk R. The burglar re-enters from door L. He goes to the sofa, puts his lamp on the floor and sets to work silently; after he has finished drilling, he inserts the 'soup', adjusts the wires and attaches an end to his battery; there is a dull explosion and the door flies open. As the burglar reaches into the safe for the money, the boys come down quickly and seize him) You would, would you?

BURGLAR. (Struggling) What the—! (All three talk ad lib. through this struggle)

BUCK. (Putting his hand over the burglar's mouth) Shut up! Stick your handkerchief in his jaw, Dave. Now, put him over there and tie him.

(The burglar suddenly throws them both off and strikes DAVE, who falls; the burglar then dashes off through the open window.)

DAVE. (c.) Get him, Buck, get him!

BUCK. (Near water cooler, D. L.) No, let him go. We don't want him.

DAVE. (*Holding his hand to his face*) Gee, what a wallop.

BUCK. Hurt you much?

DAVE. Just about ruined me, that's all.

BUCK. Anyway, we stopped him from getting the coin.

DAVE. Luck is coming our way at last. (*Crossing to safe*) Now, let's get it and get out of here while we have the chance. (*He starts to take out money*)

BUCK. (*Cross to DAVE*) Wait a minute, Dave.

DAVE. What's the matter?

BUCK. I don't think we ought to take that money.

DAVE. Why not?

BUCK. That's what that other fellow tried to do just now, and he's a burglar.

DAVE. What's that got do with us?

BUCK. Don't you see? if we take that money, we'll be in his class: just a couple of crooks and nothing else.

DAVE. Well, if you feel that way about it, why didn't you say something before?

BUCK. I never realized what we were doing until I saw that fellow at the safe. Let's leave the money there and take our chances the other way.

DAVE. You know what those chances are, don't you?

BUCK. Yes.

DAVE. We'll be put in jail, that's what.

BUCK. I'll take my medicine.

DAVE. Well, it'll be a place to sleep and they'll have to feed us anyway.

(ANNA enters.)

BUCK. Are you game?

DAVE. I am if you are.

BUCK. Then let's get out of here while we have

the chance. (*Lights. At this moment, ANNA, who has entered quietly and unobserved, presses the electric button and switches on the lights. The boys turn in astonishment*) Anna!

DAVE. Oh, Lord!

BUCK. How did you know we were here?

ANNA. I waited for you at the house and you didn't come, so I knew you must be here.

BUCK. Mr. Braden and I ran down to get some things.

ANNA. That's not Mr. Braden.

BUCK. You know?

ANNA. I've known all along.

DAVE. You won't give us away!

ANNA. (*Crossing down c. Looks at safe*) I didn't believe it because I didn't want to believe it, but you *are* a thief after all.

BUCK. No, no. We didn't do that—it was a burglar, but he got away from us.

ANNA. Oh, don't lie to me any more.

BUCK. I'm telling you the truth.

ANNA. You took the money Mr. Strawbridge put in that safe.

BUCK. We haven't touched it. It's still there. You can see for yourself.

ANNA. Then why did you come?

BUCK. To get my salary, that's all. But we realized that it was wrong to take it that way, and we were just going to leave—Oh! I know it looks rotten, but please don't judge us before you know everything.

ANNA. I do know everything, and that's why I came. I wanted to be sure you've deceived me from the start, and now I don't want to see or hear from you again.

BUCK. No—you're wrong. (*Door slams off R.*)

DAVE. What's that?

ANNA. The police.

DAVE. The police!!

ANNA. Yes, they were sent for.

(DAVE goes to door c.)

BUCK. Good Lord, if they find us here with that safe blown open!

DAVE. They'll think we did it.

BUCK. (*Going to ANNA L.*) Quick, Anna, you've got to get out of here. You can slip into the hall through the side door and while they are in here, you can get to the street.

ANNA. Do you think that I——?

BUCK. Don't you see if they find you here with us, you'll be arrested, too! They'll think you just as guilty as we are. Anna, please, for your own sake—

DAVE. He's coming—he's coming!!!

(ANNA goes into room L.)

BUCK. The lights, quick. (*Lights out. DAVE, who is listening up at center, presses the electric button and the lights go out*) Hide. (*BUCK drops down behind desk L. and DAVE hides up R.*)

(*The center door is opened and JAP enters; he presses the electric button and throws on the lights. He comes down center and sees the safe.*)

JAP. By God! They've gotten away with it! (*He runs to the safe, reaches it and takes out the package of money*) No, they haven't! (*As he starts to put it in his pocket, BUCK speaks, coming center*)

BUCK. Put that money back!

JAP. (*Turning, startled*) What?

DAVE. (*At left of desk*) Put that money back, do you hear?

JAP. (*Puts money in coat pocket*) What are you fellows doing here?

BUCK. Never mind what we are doing here. We've caught *you* with the goods.

JAP. You've caught *me*! I like that—when I find you fellows in hiding and the safe blown open.

DAVE. We didn't blow the safe. A burglar did that.

JAP. You'll have a hard job proving that.

BUCK. We don't have to prove anything. You are the one who's in bad. I knew that woman would get you into trouble.

JAP. What woman?

DAVE. That woman at the Raleigh. Remember what I said about her, Buck?

BUCK. We're sorry for you, Walter, because we know you were tempted. Put that money back and we'll give you another chance.

JAP. Don't make me laugh.

BUCK. You won't do it, eh!

JAP. Certainly not. You want me to let it go so you can grab it yourself. I'm on to you both. That's what you came here for. I've got a right to this money and I'm going to hang on to it. And in the morning, I'll have you fellows up for burglary. (*He starts for center door. Police whistle heard off R. Officer and watchman heard running down hall*)

BUCK. Grab him, Dave! (*DAVE and BUCK seize JAP; he struggles*)

JAP. Let go! Let go of me, do you hear?

BUCK. Get it away from him. (*While they struggle, police officer enters center door, followed by watchman*)

OFFICER. (*Levelling his gun*) Put up your hands—all of you! (*They stop instantly and throw*

up their hands in astonishment. DAVE is R. JAP is at corner of desk L. C. Officer center, BUCK L.)
The whole gang, eh! Well, this is some haul. (*Sees safe*) A clean blow, eh?

BUCK. You are just in time, officer. He was getting the best of us.

OFFICER. (*With back to audience*) Who are you?

BUCK. My name is Ryder—manager for Mr. Braden here.

OFFICER. Who is Mr. Braden?

DAVE. I am Mr. Braden.

JAP. Don't believe them. They're a couple of crooks.

OFFICER. Come here, watchman. (*Watchman steps down*) See your boss here?

WATCHMAN. That's Mr. Braden over there.

OFFICER. Who's this fellow?

WATCHMAN. Mr. Walter—he works here.

JAP. I tell you you're making a mistake. Send for Mr. Rice, he'll identify me.

BUCK. Don't pay any attention to him.

DAVE. We caught him robbing the safe.

OFFICER. Did he get anything?

BUCK. Yes: the pay-roll—he's got it on him now.

(*Officer seizes JAP, reaches into his pocket and takes out the roll of money. JAP ad lib. while struggling with Officer.*)

OFFICER. Is this it?

BUCK. Yes. Thank you, officer. We'll see that you're rewarded.

OFFICER. (*Crosses to DAVE*) You'd better take charge of this money, Mr. Braden.

JAP. Don't let them have that money!

OFFICER. That'll be about all out of you.

(*Watchman and Officer take JAP, who protesting, out c. They ad lib. and exit.*)

Curtain

ACT IV

SCENE: *Parlor at the BRANNIGANS'. Shortly after the preceeding act.*

AT RISE: *The stage is empty. DAVE enters, followed by BUCK.*

DAVE. I'm as nervous as a cat. Every time we passed a cop I swallowed my palate. (*Goes to sofa*) I thought we were pinched sure.

BUCK. (*Crosses to L.*) It's a wonder we weren't. You couldn't have looked more guilty if you'd committed murder.

DAVE. Well, I—What'll they do to that guy, Walter? Will they send him up?

BUCK. (*Puts hat and coat on chair by fire*) I don't know. It's Anna I'm worrying about. (*Goes up and rings bell*)

DAVE. I wouldn't like to see Walter sent up.

BUCK. They can't do anything unless you appear against him in the morning.

DAVE. (*Sits on sofa*) And by that time we'll be in Canada, won't we?

BUCK. That depends on Anna.

DAVE. You mean you won't go unless she does?

BUCK. That's the way I feel, Dave. (*NETTIE enters center*) Oh! Nettie, will you ask Miss Anderson if I can see her for a few minutes? Say it's very important.

NETTIE. Yes, sir. (*Goes up the stairs*)

BUCK. (*Coming down to DAVE*) Where's that money?

DAVE. I have it. (*Takes out money*) What are you going to do with it?

BUCK. (*Takes money from DAVE*) Turn it over to Anna. It's got to go back.

DAVE. I don't see why?

BUCK. Because we're responsible for it.

DAVE. How are we? Didn't that cop force it on me? And I can't take Norma away without some money.

BUCK. (*Puts money in pocket*) Where is Norma?

DAVE. I told her to meet me here.

BUCK. What?

DAVE. I told her to meet me here at nine o'clock and be ready to travel. (*Looks at his watch*)

BUCK. But you didn't tell her the truth about yourself.

DAVE. No, I didn't have the nerve.

BUCK. Well, there's one thing you've got to understand right now. That little girl must be told the truth, and so must Anna. They've got to know who you are and what you've done—what *we've both* done. Then if they decide to stick, all right, but no four-flushing. I don't want any come-back on this. (*Crosses to front of table*)

DAVE. There won't be any. Norma and I understand each other perfectly. But what will you do if Anna won't come?

(*NETTIE comes down-stairs, and goes out hall L.*)

BUCK. Stay and take my medicine.

DAVE. (*Up-stage*) That means we'll be arrested.

BUCK. You needn't stay unless you want to. I got you into this and if you feel like going—I'll understand.

DAVE. And leave you to face it alone? What do you think I am?

BUCK. (*Crosses and puts hands on DAVE'S shoulders*) You're all right, Dave.

(ANNA enters from stairs, and they break.)

ANNA. (*To DAVE*) Miss Noggs is waiting for you.

DAVE. (*Crosses up to her. BUCK crosses R.*) What did you tell her?

ANNA. Nothing.

DAVE. Where is she?

ANNA. Up in my room. At the head of the stairs.

DAVE. I'll find it. (*Runs out center and up the stairs*)

ANNA. (*At R. of table*) Well, Buck?

BUCK. It's mighty good of you to see me, Anna. I was afraid you wouldn't.

ANNA. I want to give you every chance.

BUCK. First, I want to explain what happened after you left.

ANNA. You needn't: I was in the other room and heard everything. (*Crosses in front of chair*)

BUCK. Anna!

ANNA. What have you done with the money?

BUCK. I have it. Oh, don't be afraid. I'm not going to keep it, but I want you to know how it all happened. It's not nearly as bad as you think. I admit we've done wrong, but it was only in the beginning. I was desperate for a chance to prove myself, and when this boy came along and you said you'd stick—it was in this room—remember?

ANNA. You should have told me then.

BUCK. I didn't stop to think. Everything came so easy and we didn't think we were harming anybody. We took nothing but our salaries and were

perfectly satisfied that way, but this afternoon a man called to see Dave—you saw him?

ANNA. Yes.

BUCK. He was a detective employed by Braden's western lawyers. That frightened us and we lost our heads.

ANNA. (*Sits R. of table*) If you had only told me!

BUCK. We meant to—honestly we did. We intended to get just enough money to take us over the border and explain it all to you before I asked you to come with me. (*ANNA rises*) Oh, I know now that there wasn't any chance of that. I've been in all wrong from the start. You gave me a lift when I was starving and I wanted to do something that would prove my love for you, but I—(*Turning away wearily*) I seem to have made a mess of it, like everything else. (*Sits on couch R.*)

ANNA. There's only one thing for you to do now.

BUCK. What's that?

ANNA. Mr. Walter has been taken to the station. You must take that money down to him.

BUCK. You mean give myself up?

ANNA. Tell Mr. Walter what you have told me and throw yourself on his mercy.

BUCK. What has Walter to do with it?

ANNA. I'm not free to explain that, but it's the only thing for you to do. (*Turns from him*)

BUCK. (*Rises*) I'll do anything you tell me to do but won't you forgive me? I can stand anything if you'll just say that.

ANNA. I can't say any more until you have seen Mr. Walter. (*Crosses to left*)

BUCK. (*After a pause*) Very well. (*Cross L. above table for hat and coat, and is about to go up as DAVE enters from stairs, followed by NORMA*)

(*DAVE carries bags.*)

DAVE. (*Crosses to D. R. NORMA back of table*)
Well, are you all ready? Where's your stuff?

BUCK. I'm not going, Dave.

DAVE. What?

BUCK. Anna has convinced me that the only square thing to do is to take this money down to the police station and release Mr. Walter.

DAVE. (*Puts suitcase back of sofa*) Go down to the police station? Not me!

ANNA. It's the only honest thing to do. I'm sure that Norma will agree with me.

NORMA. (*Back of table*) What money are you talking about?

BUCK. Hasn't he told you?

NORMA. No.

DAVE. (*Weakly*) I didn't have the nerve. (*Brightening quickly*) But I told her who I was, and it's all right. She's going with me. Aren't you, Norma?

NORMA. (*Crossing to DAVE—affectionately*) I think it's terribly romantic.

BUCK. (*Crosses to L. of table*) Remember, you'll lose your share of the estate if you marry him.

NORMA. I know. Mother will be awfully mad, but I don't care.

DAVE. Maybe she doesn't think something of me?

BUCK. Well, she's old enough to know what she's doing. Anyway, that's none of my business, but this other thing is different.

NORMA. Whose money is it?

ANNA. It was taken from the office.

NORMA. (*To DAVE*) Why, you didn't tell me that!

DAVE. Well, I didn't take it. It was handed to me. I don't see why we should go down to the police station before it's time.

BUCK. You said you'd take your medicine.

DAVE. I will, if Norma feeds it to me. She's the only one we've done anything to, because the business is here and if she's willing to stand for what we've done. (*The door bell rings twice. He stops. They all look toward the door*) Who's that?

BUCK. (*Crosses up, looks off R.*) The Bran-nigans, I guess.

ANNA. No, they've gone to the theater. It's too early for them.

DAVE. Somebody for us. I know it.

BUCK. See who it is, Dave.

DAVE. Do something yourself. I've had enough thrills for one evening.

ANNA. Never mind. Nettie is going. (*They pause and listen, as NETTIE is seen to cross at back and go to door*)

DENISON. (*Heard outside R.*) Mr. Braden in?

NETTIE. (*In hall*) He's in the parlor.

DAVE. It's that detective! Let's beat it! (*Starts toward R. door*)

NETTIE. (*Appears at door*) Gentleman to see Mr. Braden.

DENISON. (*Enters center*) It's all right. He knows me. (*NETTIE goes out L. and DENISON apparently speaks to someone in hall*) Just wait there a moment, will you? (*He surveys the group in room*) H'm, quite a party!

DAVE. (*Crosses up to DENISON. NORMA goes R.*) What do you want?

DENISON. Just a little talk with you.

DAVE. We're just leaving. (*Starts up-stage R.*)

DENISON. Got here just in time, didn't I?

BUCK. If you have any business with Mr. Braden you'll have to call at the office to-morrow.

DENISON. Your name is Ryder, isn't it? You're his manager.

BUCK. I am, but I don't see what that has to do?

DENISON. Mine is Denison—Denison Detective Agency. Mean anything to you?

BUCK. Not a thing. And we haven't time to talk about it.

DENISON. I'm here to talk with this young man—now. Get me?

BUCK. (*Somewhat cowed*) Make it quick, then.

DAVE. What's it about?

DENISON. These young ladies in on it?

DAVE. This is Miss Noggs, my fiancée.

DENISON. (*Turning to ANNA*) I saw this young lady at your office this afternoon.

BUCK. Miss Anderson.

DENISON. (*Comes right around table c.*) How do you do, Miss? You may be able to help me.

ANNA. (*Crosses to table. BUCK crosses D. L. of ANNA*) In what way?

DENISON. I'm looking for a Mr. Jericho W. Braden.

DAVE. (*Quickly—down R.*) We met this afternoon.

DENISON. No doubt about that, but you are not Braden.

DAVE. What do you mean?

DENISON. Just what I say. You're not Jericho W. Braden.

DAVE. Then who am I?

DENISON. I'll find that out in a minute.

BUCK. Say, if you think you can come here and insult Mr. Braden like this!

DENISON. Cut that indignant stuff. It won't get you anything. I'm here to find Mr. Braden and it's dollars to doughnuts you know where he is. If you're wise you'll come across.

BUCK. Certainly we know where he is. He's right beside you.

DENISON. Going to stick to that, are you?
(*Goes up to hall and calls; crosses up R. of table to up c.*) Step this way, please. (EMMA BRADEN enters and all look at each other without recognition) Ever see this man before? (*R. of table, indicating DAVE*)

EMMA. (*Behind table*) No.

DENISON. But you'd know Braden if you saw him?

EMMA. I ought to know him, seeing I'm——

DENISON. (*Quickly*) That's enough. (*To ANNA, indicating room R.*) What's in there?
(*Crosses down R. back sofa to door*)

ANNA. That's Mrs. Brannigan's room.

DENISON. (*To EMMA*) You'd better wait in here for a minute.

EMMA. (*Crosses down R. of table to DENISON*) But you said——?

DENISON. You'll know all about it in a minute.
(*As EMMA goes into room*) You ladies had better go with her.

BUCK. Now, see here——

DENISON. They'd better. I want to talk to you two boys alone.

BUCK. (*DAVE kisses NORMA's hand. After a short pause*) All right, Anna.

ANNA. Come, Norma. (*She takes NORMA into room R.*)

BUCK. (*DENISON shuts door*) Well?

DENISON. Well, that lady is Mrs. Jericho W. Braden.

DAVE. Mrs. Braden?

DENISON. You'll admit that she ought to know her own husband. (*Crosses to c.*) Come on boys. I've got it on you, but I'll give you one more chance. Come through with the dope or go with me on the charge of—murder.

DAVE. Murder!

BUCK. That's ridiculous.

DENISON. Is it? Figure it out for yourselves. Braden was due here on the twenty-first. On that same night this kid arrives and announces himself as Braden. He has his papers, his trunk—everything, and claims his inheritance. Takes over his business and goes along with a smoothness that shows he never expected the real Braden to show up. That's a pretty good case, all right. (*Emphasizes by striking fist on table*)

DAVE. (*Crosses to DENISON*) Wait a minute. I'll tell you the whole thing.

DENISON. Oh, you're willing to talk now, are you?

BUCK. Hold on, Dave.

DENISON. (*To BUCK*) You'll get your chance after he's through. (*To DAVE*) Go on. You admit you're not Braden.

DAVE. Yes. My name is Fulton—Dave Fulton.

DENISON. And where's Braden?

DAVE. He's dead.

DENISON. You killed him.

DAVE. Yes—No, no, he was in that wreck—

DENISON. Come on, now, you might as well tell the whole thing. You met up with him before he got here and found out about his money, and you two framed it up between you to get hold of it.

BUCK. That's not true. We haven't been out of this town, and never saw Braden.

DENISON. Then where is he?

BUCK. I don't know.

DENISON. Don't know, eh? Well, I guess there's no use going any further with this. Come on, get your hats. (*Up L. to c.*)

DAVE. (*Crosses up back R. of table*) But you're wrong. I never saw the man—wouldn't know him if I did see him.

DENISON. You'll get the chance to tell all that in court.

BUCK. (*Crosses up to DENISON*) Wait a minute. If it's going to be like that you'd better take me. I'm responsible for the whole thing.

DAVE. Don't you believe him.

BUCK. This boy had nothing to do with it. He only did what I told him to do.

DAVE. Nothing like that at all: he was only my manager.

DENISON. Say, which one of you *did* do it?

BUCK. I did. } (*Together*)

DAVE. Me.

DENISON. Just to make sure, I'll take you both. Come on. (*Starts to go*)

DAVE. Can't I say good-bye to Miss Noggs?

BUCK. And I'd like to see Miss Anderson.

DENISON. They'll only kick up a fuss.

BUCK. You needn't tell them what we're arrested for. They'll think it's something else.

(DENISON *hesitates a moment, then goes down to room R. and opens the door. DAVE crosses R. of table. BUCK crosses D. L.*)

DENISON. Come in, ladies.

(ANNA and NORMA *enter but nobody speaks.*

ANNA *goes to BUCK L. and NORMA to DAVE R. C. DENISON pantomimes to EMMA, who is off R. DENISON closes door D. R.*)

ANNA. What's happened?

BUCK. He's got us.

DAVE. We're pinched.

NORMA. Pinched? Oh, darling, who pinched you? (*Crosses to DAVE*)

DAVE. (*Embracing NORMA*) That guy—but don't worry, it'll come out all right. (*Hugs her*)

ANNA. Of course it will. You must be brave. This is only what we expected.

DENISON. So you were expecting it, eh? You're certainly some bunch! (*Crosses back of couch up to c. door*) Come on, we'd better be moving.

NORMA. (*Holding DAVE. BUCK starts toward coat. ANNA crosses to D. L.*) I won't let him go. I won't let him leave me like this.

(*DAVE tries to comfort her, and ANNA goes to BUCK as JAP enters, followed by RICE. DENISON to L. above table.*)

JAP. Here they are—all of them. I guess we're just in time.

DAVE. Good Lord, he's out!

(*RICE behind table.*)

JAP. (*Crossing down to L. of DAVE*) No thanks to you. If I hadn't been able to reach Mr. Rice I'd have been there all night.

RICE. (*Puts hat on table*) Bless my soul! What's all this?

NORMA. (*Running to RICE*) Oh, Mr. Rice, you won't let them take my Jerry away, will you?

RICE. My dear child——

DENISON. (*At left of table c.*) Hold on a second. Who is this?

RICE. My name is Rice. I'm an attorney and one of the executors for the Hewit estate.

DENISON. I've heard of you, Mr. Rice.

RICE. And who are you, sir?

DENISON. Denison's my name. I'm a detective.

RICE. Then you're the very man we want. I

want these two men arrested on a charge of conspiracy.

JAP. And burglary.

DENISON. What burglary?

DAVE. Don't you believe a word he says. He was after the money himself, but we beat him to it.

(BUCK *snaps fingers at DAVE.*)

JAP. These men broke into my office and robbed the safe of the weekly pay-roll.

BUCK. Your office? Ha!

DAVE. Why, he worked for me. Just an ordinary employee, that's all.

NORMA. They can't arrest you. I won't let them!

RICE. My child, this man is a criminal.

NORMA. I don't care, I love him and I'm going to marry him.

RICE. And forfeit your inheritance? I can't permit you to do such a thing.

NORMA. I don't care anything about the old money. I just want my Jerry.

DAVE. (NORMA *sits R. of table. DAVE crosses over to NORMA. JAP cross behind sofa down R.*) It's mighty sweet of you to feel that way, but I wouldn't be much good to you in jail.

RICE. That's common sense. (To DENISON) Do your duty and arrest this man for burglary.

DENISON. Just a minute, Mr. Rice. I've got these men on a more serious charge.

RICE. What *could* be more serious?

DENISON. Murder.

JAP and ANNA. Murder?

NORMA. Oh, no.

DAVE. (*Crosses and kneels on couch with back to audience*) Good-night, ladies.

ANNA. Buck.

RICE. Whose murder?

DENISON. The murder of Jericho W. Braden.

RICE. Totally absurd.

JAP. It's impossible.

DENISON. Why is it?

JAP. (*Crosses to c. below table. Puts hat on table c.*) Because I'm Braden.

BUCK. You? (*Cross L. of table*)

(*RICE crosses to L. of sofa.*)

JAP. Jerry Braden of Walla Walla.

DAVE. Gee, but I'd like to believe you!

RICE. (*At right of NORMA—to her*) My dear, you see now why you mustn't do anything rash. If you persist in marrying this young man the entire estate would revert to Mr. Braden.

NORMA. I don't care. I love him and I'm going to marry him. (*Crosses R. to couch, sits by DAVE*)

RICE. My dear child, you must—

JAP. Hold on, Mr. Rice, we mustn't try to force this girl.

RICE. You have a very good reason for not doing so, but I shan't permit such a sacrifice.

DENISON. Don't be in such a hurry, please. I don't know anything about this other thing, and I don't want to, but I am interested in finding Braden.

RICE. I've already told you—

DENISON. Just so, but I'm not satisfied. This young fellow may be all that he claims, and then again he may not. I want to ask you one question. Are you married?

JAP. Certainly not.

DENISON. You're sure of that, are you?

JAP. Of course I am.

DAVE. (*As DENISON goes to room R.*) Now you've queered the whole thing.

DENISON. I'm ready for you, madam.

EMMA. (*Enters R., amid a dead silence. At*

sight of JAP she gives a cry:) Jerry! (*Runs over to him*)

JAP. Emma—

EMMA. Oh, I'm so glad to see you.

DENISON. (*By door D. R.*) Is this your husband, madam?

EMMA. Of course, it is. Can't you see?

RICE. Her husband?

DAVE. Now I know what's the matter with that guy.

JAP. You've done it now, Emma.

EMMA. Oh, Jerry, have I spoiled it for you? I didn't mean to. But I was so afraid that something had happened to you. (*She cries upon JAP's shoulder*)

JAP. It's all right, old girl. We'll live through it, I guess. (*Takes her in his arms*)

BUCK. Well, if this doesn't beat——!

RICE. (*Indignantly*) What is the meaning of this, sir?

DAVE. (*Rises*) Yes, what is the meaning of this, sir?

JAP. (*Crosses, EMMA to his left*) I may as well own up. We've been married for nearly a year, but I thought I could find a way to get my share of the estate in spite of it.

RICE. You deliberately deceived us. You tried to make us believe——

JAP. You can't blame me for trying to get what was left to me, can you?

RICE. Bless my soul, it's—it's unbelievable! (*Goes up C. crosses to up L. C. EMMA crosses L. of table up C.*)

DENISON. Well, my job is finished, I guess, if you'll just sign your name to this. (*Crosses to JAP*)

(*NORMA rises.*)

JAP. What is it?

DENISON. My voucher.

DAVE. (*Crosses to R. of DENISON*) Don't you sign anything. That's the way he got me.

JAP. I'll take a chance. (*He signs with fountain pen and gives paper to DENISON. The latter compares it with signature on sheet*) All right?

DENISON. Yes, you're Braden, all right.

BUCK. Then if he is, you can't hold us.

DENISON. Not for murder, but if Mr. Braden wants to prosecute on this other charge—

JAP. Just wait outside a minute, will you?

DENISON. Sure. (*Goes out center*)

JAP. Now, then, where's that money?

BUCK. (*Takes out money*) I've got it. I don't suppose you'll believe me, but it was a burglar blew that safe.

JAP. On the level?

RICE. (*As JAP starts for money, RICE crosses between BUCK and JAP, and takes money. Crosses R.*) I think I'd better take charge of the money.

JAP. Perhaps you had. I don't suppose I have any further claim on it myself.

RICE. Quite so.

DAVE. I think I—(*DAVE tries to touch the money in RICE's hand*)

RICE. And as Miss Noggs is willing to live up to the conditions of the will which concern her, and which are now obviously impossible for you—(*Indicating EMMA*)

NORMA. (*Crosses to RICE—right of table*) No, I'm not willing, I'm going to marry my Jerry and no one else.

DAVE. My name isn't Jerry.

NORMA. (*Crosses to DAVE*) You'll always be my little Jerry.

RICE. (*Puts money in pocket*) Well, there was no provision made for such a situation as this.

NORMA. I don't see why we can't divide the old estate; that's what Mr. Hewit intended——

JAP. (*Crossing toward RICE*) That's a great idea. If Miss Noggs marries, her husband becomes my partner and the firm continues as before.

DAVE. Then I declare Buck in on my end. We're partners, you know.

BUCK. Oh, no, nothing like that at all.

JAP. After all, you've made a success of it, and I'd like you boys to stay, if only for the good of the firm.

BUCK. You mean that?

JAP. Sure.

(*RICE crosses up back of table.*)

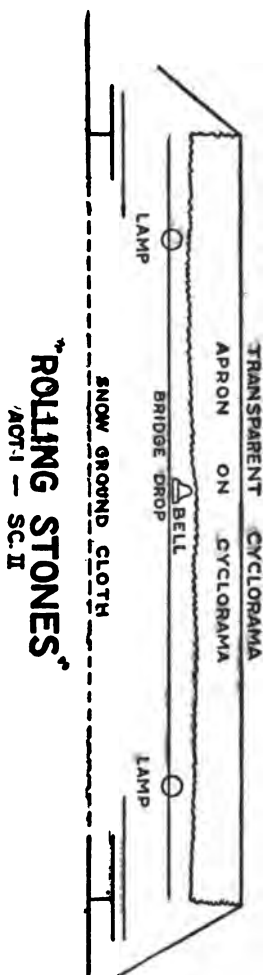
BUCK. What do you say, Anna?

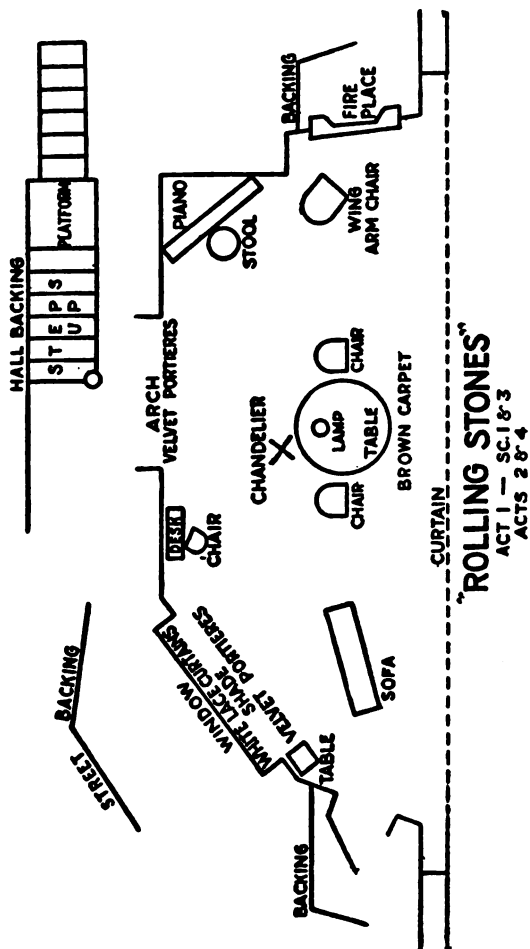
ANNA. (*Turns slowly*) I promised to stick, you know.

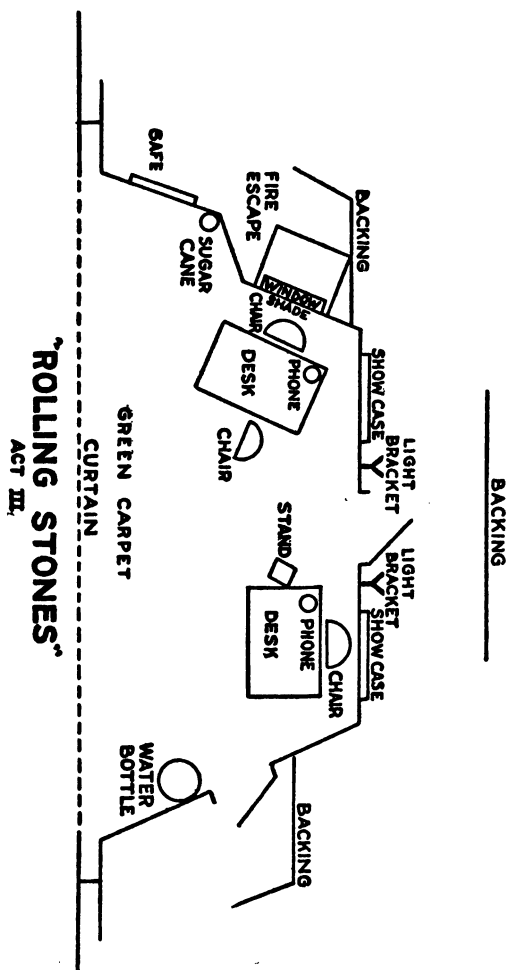
(*BUCK takes her in his arms.*)

DAVE. Tell that cop to go home. Come on, Norma, let's unpack. (*He gets his suit-case, and sits on couch with NORMA. JAP crosses R. of table; EMMA follows him*)

Curtain







SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

- SCENE I. Parlor at the Brannigans'. Immediately after dinner on a night in November.
II. The Clark Street Bridge. Same night.
III. Parlor at the Brannigans'. A few minutes later.

ACT II

Parlor at the Brannigans'. Following morning.

ACT III

Offices of the Hewitt Candy Stores.
One month later.

(During this act the curtain will be lowered to indicate a lapse of hours.)

ACT IV

Back at the Brannigans'. Half hour later.

TIME: *The present.*

PLACE: *Chicago.*

PROPERTY PLOT

ACT I—SCENE I

ARTICLE AND WHERE PLACED

Brown ground cloth down, Covering stage proper
Medallion, A little left of center
Rug, Before fireplace
Carpet, On hall stairs

FURNITURE

Fireplace, Down left
2 vases, On mantel shelf
Old ornamental clock, On mantel shelf
2 small photographs, On mantel shelf
Gas log (Practical), In mantel opening
Andirons, In mantel opening
Foot railings, In mantel opening
Fire iron (Shovel, etc.), Down stage of fireplace
Large chair, Front of fireplace
White tidy, On this chair
Upright piano, Catty cornered up L.
Piano stool,
2 white vases, On this Piano
Silver basket, On this piano
Yellow piano cover, On this piano
Sheet music, On this piano
Desk, Upright door
Large silver pitcher, On this desk
2 small vases, On this desk
2 small photographs, On this desk
1 calendar, On this desk
1 pen tray, On this desk
Pen holders, On this desk
Ink stand, On this desk
Pens, On this desk
Paper, On this desk
Envelopes, On this desk
Envelope holder, On this desk
Hand blotter, On this desk

Desk blotter, On this desk
Gilt chair, Down stage of this desk
Small stand, Up stage of door R. 2
Glass water pitcher, On this stand
2 glasses, On this stand
Tray, On this stand
Green and yellow table cover, On this stand
Round table, A little left of center
Lamp (Electric) with yellow shade, On this table
Red and yellow table cover, On this table
2 magazines, On this table
Safety matches in holder, On this table
Box safety matches, On this table
Plush backed chair, Right of this table
Plush backed chair, Left of this table
Plush sofa, About right center
2 sofa cushions, Right end of this sofa

PICTURES AND HANGINGS

Oil painting, Over fireplace
Portrait of lady, On flat up stage of fireplace
Portrait of lady, On back wall left of door
Enlargement of Brannigan and Mrs. Brannigan in
wedding clothes, Above desk
"What Not", Above stand against wall
Small white vases, etc., Right
Small book
Red plush curtains, Large window up R. c.
White lace curtains, Large window up R. c.
Red plush curtains or portiers, Door up c.

IN HALL

Black hall rack (Hanging), Against flat to right of
opening up c.
Chromo, At left of hall rack
Chair, Stands under hall rack

HAND PROPS, ON STAGE: NONE

HAND PROPS, OFF STAGE

Cigarette paper, Jap, Off

Bag tobacco, Jap, Left

Tooth pick, Jap, Left

Chicago newspaper, Jap, Left

Thirty-six dollars in money, Anna, Left

Suit case (Clothes in it), Buck, Left

Revolver (In suit case), Buck, Left

Door bell effect, Right

Revolver, Dave, Left

NOTE: (At end of scene one, the curtains on window up right should be opened to allow "ripple" effect to shine thru for bridge scene II.)

ACT I—SCENE II

SNOW CLOTH DOWN, from R. 3 to apron—and all across stage

ACT I—SCENE III**HAND PROPS, ON STAGE**

Box safety matches, Buck, Table c.

HAND PROPS, OFF STAGE, OFF

Tray, Buck, Left

Pint bottle milk, Buck, Left

Plate sandwiches, Buck, Left

1 plate, Buck, Left

½ apple pie, Buck, Left

Cup and saucer, Buck, Left

Crash glass effect, Buck, Left

Revolver, Brannigan, Left

Curtains window up right are open

NOTE: (Full chair L. of table c. up stage during change to enable Dave to crawl under table.)

ACT II

Curtains, windows up right are open

HAND PROPS, ON STAGE

Chicago newspaper, Dave, Mantel shelf

HAND PROPS, OFF STAGE

Trunk check, Emma, Off right

Wallet, Rice

2 letters, Rice,

White identification card, Jap, Off right

Old gold watch, Jap, Right

Letter carrier's bag, Postman, Right

Pencil, Postman, Right

Several packages letters, Postman, Right

Large Manila envelope (Contains) Right

Birth certificate, Right

Identification card, Right

Letter, Right

2 red registered letter card, Off right

Napkin, Dave, Off left

Door bell effect, Auto horn

ARTICLE AND WHERE PLACED

ACT III

Brown ground cloth, Covers stage proper

FURNITURE

Water cooler, Down stage of door L. 2

Glass

Hat rack, In u. r. left corner

Desk, About left center

Desk chair, Above this desk

Desk pad, On this desk

Pens, On this desk

Pencil, On this desk
 Letters, On this desk
 Telephone, At right end of this desk
 Telephone book, At right end of this desk
 Ribbon card, At right end of this desk
 Vase of flowers, At right end of this desk
 Matches in holder, At right end of this desk
 Usual office desk paraphernalia, At right end of
 this desk
 Desk, Right center (Rakes down R. and up L.)
 Desk chair, Right of desk
 Chair, Left of desk
 Telephone, Up right end of this desk
 Buzzer, On this desk
 Pads, On this desk
 Papers, On this desk
 Ink, On this desk
 Pencils, On this desk
 Usual office desk paraphernalia, On this desk
 Safe, Set in wall R. 2
 Ledger books, In this safe
 Shelves, Up L. and up R.
 Candy boes, On these shelves
 Candy display, right of desk L. c.
 Corn stalk with red ribbons, In corner up stage of
 safe
 Green window shade, On window up right

PICTURES

SIGNS: Over water cooler D. L.
 Hewitt's *Kisses Please*
 Every Girl.
 Stick to Hewitt's taffy and Panel up stage of door L.
 It will stick to you.
 We pay our Girls \$9 a week.
 Eat Hewitt's Candy and stop White Slavery, Panel
 over safe D. R.

Eat Hewitt's Peanut Brittle and Stop Drinking
(Panel on hall backing up c.)

HAND PROPS ON STAGE

Memorandum book, Anna, Desk left

Box kises (Picture girl on cover) Dave, Desk left

Jelly Beans—for Dave—in boxes on shelf up right

Small pad—for Clerk—desk right

Check book, Dave, Desk left

HAND PROPS OFF STAGE

Pencil, Jap, Off left

Order blank, Jap, Off left

Check, Strawbridge, Off left

Key on key ring, Strawbridge, Off left

Money-bag—contains

Cloth bag of coins

Package of money (paper)

Wallet—contains

Letter

Red registered card, Denison, Off right

Voucher

SCENE II

Burglar tools For Burglar, Off-right

Glass cutter

Battery

Coil of wire

Small bottle (supposed to contain nitro-glycerine)

Steel drill

Flash light

Police whistle, Watchman, Off right

Electric lantern, Watchman, Off right

Revolver, Policeman, Off right

Matches, Buck, Off right

Match, Dave, Off right

ACT IV

Brown ground cloth, etc. Same as Acts I and II.

PROPS OFF STAGE

Suit case, Dave, Off right

Ladies traveling bag, Dave, Off left

Fountain pen, Jap, Off right

Door bell effect, Off right

LIGHT PLOT

ACT I—SCENE I

AT RISE:

Fireplace

Gas log (if practical one is used) Fireplace, On

2 blue olivettes, Window up R. c., On

Amber and white strip, Over door up c., On

Hall lamp, In hall up c., On

2 lamp strip, Over door down R., On

FULL UP:

Ambers and white in foots

Ambers and white Concert border

Chandelier 3 amber lamps

Lamp on table c.

CUE TO CHANGE:

Buck starts for door up c. at end of act

Everything OUT

SCENE II

The moment the curtain hits the stage at end of
Scene I. Blue foots should be thrown a 1-3 up.

AT RISE:

1-3 up on concert border blues

Blues in 1 border $\frac{1}{2}$ up

2 white "bridge" lights, On

"Ripple" effect. Shining thru transparent drops
at right
Bunch light. Shines thru right center of drops

SCENE III

The moment the curtain hits the stage in Scene II.
Whites and ambers should be thrown on in
foots: also "Working light" concert strip.

AT RISE:

Blue olivettes. Window up r. c., On
Hall lamp in hall up c., On

CHANGE:

Buck lights lamp table c.
Bring up 5 lamp strip in foots (3 amber and 2
white)

CHANGE:

Anna enters pushes button

FULL UP

Chandelier

FULL UP. Amber and whites foots

Amber and white Concert border

NOTE: At the end of the act table lamp should be
"struck" as it is used in act I, only.

Steel blue should be used in foots, borders and
olivettes

LIGHT PLOT ACT II

AT RISE:

Amber and white foots
Amber and white concert border, full up
Strip over door up c., On
Strip over door up r. 2., On
Amber in olivettes window up r. c., On
Auto " (Klaxon) " horn effect, On r.

ACT III

AT RISE:

Amber and white foots

Amber and white concert border—Full up

2 lamp strips over door D. L., On

2 lamp strips over door up c., On

2 amber olivettes window up R. c., On

SCENE II

AT RISE:

Blue foots 1-3 up

Blue olivettes window R. c.

CHANGE: Cue — — — — — while we've got the chance.

Anna enters.

Full up. Ambers and white foots

Ambers and white concert border

2 wall brackets left and right of door up center

CHANGE:

Cue. — — — — — quick the lights.

Concert border

White foots OUT

Brackets

CHANGE:

Cue. — — — — — Jap enters.

Full up (White concert border

White foots

Brackets

Flash lamp for Burglar U. R.

Electric lantern for Watchman U. R.

ACT IV

AT RISE:

2 blue olivettes, window up R. c., On

Hall lamp, in hall up c., On

ROLLING STONES

Full up. Ambers and white foots, on
Ambers and concert border

Chandelier

Strip over door R.

Electric push bell L. of door up C. (practical)

NOTE: If a real safe is used blocks should be brought on during change and placed by Burglar so that door in falling won't break handle and combination. Chairs should be shoved under desks as far as possible to allow plenty room for business. Window shade should be run up to top while change is being made.

Door slam effect, Off R.

Glass cutter, Off R.

Telephone bell effect, Off R. and L.

Buzzer effect in drawer desk R.

Revolver for safe blowing effect, Off R.

Black stick to open safe door



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